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ROBERT KETT AND THE NORFOLK RISING

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

LEADERS OF THE PEOPLE

THE UNDERMAN. A Novel

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Mousehold Heath

From the Painting by Crome in The National Gallery

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ROBERT KETT
AND THE NORFOLK RISING
BY JOSEPH CLAYTON

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TO

THE RIGHT HON. JOHN BURNS, M.P.

Once a popular rebel, now an unpopular
Minister of State, but always a large-hearted
lover of the common people

THIS BOOK IS INSCRIBED BY HIS FRIEND

THE AUTHOR

IN MEMORY OF A CERTAIN JOINT PILGRIMAGE

TO THE

SCENES OF THE NORFOLK RISING

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PREFACE

THE story of the uprising of the country people of Norfolk, under the leadership of Robert Kett, in 1549, is of more than local interest. The story is immortal for lovers of English liberty. It was an agrarian war, this uprising, waged by the peasants, with courage and with characteristic good temper and moderation, against their enemies the landowners. The ferocity displayed in the peasant insurrections in France and Germany is conspicuously absent in the "Kett Rebellion." As in 1381 under Wat Tyler, and 1450 under Jack Cade, an English peasantry driven to revolt could put up a good fight against intolerable conditions without any implacable hatred for their antagonists. The annals of these three great popular risings are not stained with the blood of murdered landowners. It is the peasants themselves who are sacrificed when their effort has failed. The enmity of the poor for the rich is a very rare and feeble thing compared with the dislike and contempt of the rich for the poor. (If it had ever been otherwise revolt might have become revolution.) The poor and the great mass of landless working folk in England have

never made common cause against the wealthy and the landlords, while the latter, with a few heroic exceptions, have always stood together in close phalanx against the demands of the peasants. To-day it is with savage animosity and bitter impatience that the wealthy speak from the fulness of their hearts of the working people when the latter give trouble by going on strike. At other times, when the strike is forgotten, the tone is kindly contempt for obvious inferiors.

There is neither such hatred nor scorn in the heart of the average peasant or town worker; and there never has been in England.

Kett's rebellion was suppressed by foreign mercenaries, but it lasted six weeks, and had its crowded hours of glorious life.

The enterprise of Robert Kett and the doings at his camp at Norwich, and the deeds of the brave fellows of his company, have never had full justice done to them.

As far as possible I have told the story in the words of the earliest narratives, only in every case the spelling has been changed to modern use.

J. C.

HAMPSTEAD, 1911.

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AUTHORITIES

THE earliest accounts of the Rising are *The Commotion in Norfolk,* by Nicholas Sotherton, 157 (Harleian MSS.), and *De Furoribus Norfolciensum,* by Nevylle, 1575—the latter translated into English by Wood, 1615. Holinshed's *Chronicle,* Sir John Hayward's *Life of Edward VI.,* and Blomefield's *History of Norfolk* tell the story of the Rising as it appeared to men entirely hostile to popular insurrection.

Strype's *Ecclesiastical Memorials* and *Life of Parker, Edward VI.'s Journal,* and the *State Papers* of the time contain many important references.

The Rev. F. W. Russell's *Kett's Rebellion in Norfolk* (1859)—the first attempt to deal fairly and fully with the Rising—is an accurate and reliable, though very disconnected, narrative, and the book contains copies of many original documents. Following Russell, Mason's *History of Norfolk* and *The Victoria County*

History of Norfolk give sympathetic accounts of the Rising, and Canon Dixon's *History of the Church of England* and Froude's *History of England* also deal justly with Kett.

For the Enclosures, and the social conditions generally of the period, the reader may consult Brynkelow's *Complaint of Roderick Moss* (Early English Text Society), Crowley's *Works*, (E.E.T.S.), Latimer's *Sermons* (Parker Society), Thomas Lever's *Sermons*, More's *Utopia*, W. Harrison's *Description of England*, *The Discourse of the Commonweal of England* (edited by Lamond), Leadam's *Domesday of Inclosures*, Trigge's *Humble Petition* (1604), Prof. Ashley's *Economic History*, Part II., E. P. Cheyney's *Social Changes in England in Sixteenth Century*, C. H. Cooper's *Annals of Cambridge*, J. G. Nichol's *Narratives of the Reformation*, P. F. Tytler's *England under Edward VI.*, A. H. Johnson's *Disappearance of Small Landowner*, and the articles by Dr Gray in *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, vol. xvii. (Harvard University), and *The Transactions of the Royal Historical Society of Great Britain*, vols. xvii. and xix. Dr

Gardiner's *Lollardy and the Reformation*, vol. iii., and Professor Pollard's *England under Protector Somerset* must also be mentioned for the light they throw on the events of Edward VI.'s reign.

This is, of course, no attempt at a bibliography. It is merely a list of certain books for the general reader, books of various degrees of importance and usefulness.

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I

THE CAUSE OF THE RISING

"In truth, the enclosures themselves, whereby vast numbers of poor people (whose right it was) had the food taken out of their mouths by the rich, were the causes of tumults."—Sir John Hayward, *Life of Edward VI.* Note by John Strype.

"During the period, which may be roughly defined as from 1450 to 1550, enclosure meant to a large extent the actual dispossession of the tenants by their manorial lords. This took place either in the form of the violent ousting of the sitting tenant, or of a refusal on the death of one tenant to admit the son, who in earlier centuries would have been treated as his natural successor. Proofs abound."—W. J. Ashley, *Economic History.*

"Marry, for these enclosures do undo us all, for they make us pay dearer for our land that we occupy, and cause that we can have no land in manner for our money to put to tillage; all is taken up for pastures, either for sheep or for grazing of cattle. So that I have known of late a dozen ploughs within less compass than six miles about me laid down within these seven years, and where forty persons had their livings, now one man and his shepherd hath all. Which thing is not the least cause of these uproars, for by these enclosures men do lack living and be idle, and therefore for very necessity they are desirous of a change, being in hope to come thereby to somewhat, and well assured, howsoever it befall with them, it cannot be harder with them than it was before."—*Discourse of this Commonweal of this Realm of England,* 1581.

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CHAPTER I: *The Cause of the Rising*

THE land enclosures made by the landlords provoked the Norfolk Rising of 1549. The country people, dispossessed of their holdings, were driven to revolt. They would "take arms, and mix heaven and earth together, rather than endure such great cruelty"—so the "complaint" of Kett and his rebels put it.

These enclosures, first noticeable in the latter years of the fifteenth century, take two forms—both equally destructive to the existence of an agricultural population. (1) "Engrossing"—*i.e.* the concentration of many holdings in one hand, and the "decaying" of the other holdings. By this proceeding half-a-dozen farms would be absorbed by one landowner and worked by him, or by a tenant of his, from one residence: the other five dwelling-houses being pulled down. (2) The actual enclosure of lands previously held in common by the peasants and the appropriation of these lands to the exclusive use of the landowner. In both cases the result was the same—arable

land was turned into pasture and the people were evicted.

It was not so much the enclosing of commons—the vast untilled commons were not invaded seriously by the landowners till the middle of the eighteenth century—it was this engrossing of homesteads, this concentration of many holdings under one hand, and the seizure of fields which the peasants from time immemorial had cultivated and enjoyed in common, and the throwing of these fields out of cultivation that broke up the old country life of England.

Hitherto England had been in the main a nation of small farmers. The land had been open country, and the hedgerows, that we have so long looked upon with joy in spring and summer, were unknown.[1]

[1] "No hedges or fences divided the fields: the arable land, meadows, commons, and patches of woods stretched away unenclosed, and apparently undivided till they reached the confines of another manor, whose population was similarly gathered into a village surrounded by its open farming-lands."—CHEYNEY, "Social Changes."

"Every tenant had his lands, not all in one gobbet in every field, but interlaced with his neighbour's lands; so as here should be three acres, and then his neighbour as many; and over that he, other three or four; and so after the like rate by the most part of the copyholds that I do know in this country."—"Discourse of this Commonweal."

The Cause of the Rising

With the discovery, made towards the end of the fifteenth century, that sheep and cattle were more profitable to the landowner than small tenants — since the demand for wool in the markets was constant and steady, and less labour was required when grazing took the place of tillage—came a new view of land tenure.

" A new conception of the ownership of land was rising by which it came to be looked upon, quite in contrast with the feudal or communal notion of the Middle Ages, as subject to the same completeness of control and use as any kind of personal property." [1]

Under the old view, " land was regarded not as a source of wealth but as a source of men . . . and it was more important for the lord to have men to defend him than for him to increase his wealth by extracting as much rent as he could from his tenants." [2] The new view naturally prevailed. There was no power strong enough

[1] CHEYNEY, " Social Changes."

" Land then (in the latter part of fifteenth century) came to be regarded as an investment and a source of wealth ; the lord claimed absolute ownership and the right to do what he liked with his own in order to make as much profit out of it as possible." —A. F. POLLARD, " England under Protector Somerset."

[2] POLLARD, " England under Protector Somerset."

to withstand the landlords (always the real rulers of an agricultural nation), when, in pursuit of wealth, they got rid of the people from the land and proceeded to bring in more and more sheep.[1]

In vain were laws passed and royal proclamations issued to prohibit enclosures—the laws remained a dead letter, and the proclamations were unheeded.

Acts of Parliament were passed in 1489 and 1515 against the "pulling down of towns," and ordering the restoration of tillage in pasture lands—for whole villages were being destroyed and their populations evicted by the enclosures—as we have seen in our time clearances made for deer forests in Scotland, and cattle grazing substituted for tillage in Ireland. Royal Commis-

[1] "The high price of wool, and the comparative cheapness of sheep farming, continued to tempt the landlords to throw their plough lands into grass, to amalgamate farms, and turn the people who were thrown out of employment adrift to shift for themselves. The commons at the same time were being largely enclosed, forests turned into parks, and public pastures hedged round and appropriated. . . . The yeomen, driven from their holdings, were unable to find employment elsewhere. The loss of the common lands took from many of the poor their best means of subsistence; while corn was rising to famine prices from the diminished breadth of land under the plough, and, with corn, all other articles of daily consumption."—J. A. FROUDE, "History of England"—*Reign of Edward VI.*

sions inquired into the enclosures and issued reports in 1517 and 1549. Royal proclamations denounced enclosures in 1518, 1526, 1548, and 1549. Sixteenth-century writers and preachers, of all schools, declaimed eloquently and bitterly against the misery of a people cut off from access to the land.[1]

Sir Thomas More in the first part of his "Utopia," 1516, puts the case as he saw it :

"For look in what parts of the realm doth grow the finest and therefore dearest wool, there noblemen and gentlemen, yea, and certain abbots, holy men, no doubt, not contenting themselves with the yearly revenues and profits that were wont to grow to their forefathers and predecessors of their lands, nor being content that they live in rest and pleasure—nothing profiting, yea, much annoying the public weal—leave no ground for tillage, they inclose all into pastures ; they throw down houses ; they pluck down towns and leave nothing standing but only the church to be made a sheep-fold. . . . They turn all dwelling-places and all glebe land into desolation and wilderness. Therefore, that one covetous and insatiable cormorant may compass about and inclose many thousand acres of ground together within one pale or hedge, the husbandmen be thrust out of their own, or else either by cunning or fraud, or by violent oppression, or by wrongs and injuries they be so wearied, that they be compelled to sell all. By one means therefore

[1] There is a tendency amongst certain writers to-day to belittle the enclosures of the sixteenth century, but the mass of contemporary evidence seems conclusive, both as to the extent and the results of the enclosures.

or another, either by hook or by crook they must needs depart away, men, women, husbands, wives, fatherless children, widows, mothers, with their young babies, and their whole household small in substance and large in number, as husbandry requireth many hands. Away they trudge, I say, out of their known and accustomed houses, finding no place to rest in. . . . And when they have wandered abroad till the little they have be spent, what can they then else do but steal, and then justly be hanged, or else go about a begging. And yet then also they be cast in prison as vagabonds, because they go about and work not: whom no man will set a work, though they never so willingly proffer themselves thereto. For one shepherd or herdsman is enough to eat up that ground with cattle, to the occupying whereof about husbandry many hands were requisite."

Brinklow, a fierce Protestant, in his "Complaint of Roderick Moss" (1542), speaks of "the inordinate enhancing of rents and taking of unreasonable fines," and of the misery wrought by the new landlords, who had succeeded to the abbey lands, and who, "for every trifle, even for his friends' pleasure, if the tenant have not a lease shall put him out of his farm."

Thomas Lever, Master of St John's, Cambridge, preaching before Edward VI., exclaims: "It is the common custom with covetous landlords to let their housing so decay that the farmer shall be fain for a small reward or none at all, to give up his lease: that they (the landlords), taking the ground into their own hands,

may turn all into pasture. So now old fathers, poor widows, and young children lie begging in the streets."

Latimer, at St Paul's Cross, in 1548, is no less emphatic in his judgment on the landowners: "You landlords, you rent-raisers, I may say you step lords, you have for your possession too much. That which heretofore went for £20 or £40 by the year, which is an honest portion to be had gratis in one lordship of another man's sweat and labour, now is let for £50 or £100 by the year; and thus is caused such dearth that poor men which live of their labour cannot with the sweat of their faces have a living. I tell you, my lords and masters, this is not for the King's honour. . . . If the King's honour, as some men say, standeth in the multitude of people, then these graziers, enclosers, rent-raisers, are hinderers of the King's honour; for whereas have been a great many householders and inhabitants, there is now but a shepherd and his dog. My lords and masters, such proceedings do intend plainly to make of the yeomanry slavery."

Latimer's reference to his father's holding has often been quoted, but will bear repetition: "My father was a yeoman, and had no lands of

his own, only he had a farm of £3 or £4 a year at the uttermost, and hereupon he tilled so much as kept half-a-dozen men. He had walk for 100 sheep, and my mother milked 30 kine. . . . He that now hath it, payeth £16 by year or more, and is not able to do anything for his Prince, for himself, nor for his children, or give a cup of drink to the poor."

Bishop Scory, writing to Edward VI., puts the land thrown out of cultivation at two acres out of three: "To trust to have as much upon one acre as was wont to grow upon three—for I think that the tillage is not now above that rate, if it be so much—is but a vain expectation. A great number of the people are so pined and famished by reason of the great scarcity and dearth that the great sheep masters have brought into this noble realm, that they are become more like the slavery and peasantry of France than the ancient and godly yeomanry of England."[1]

Still the enclosures went on, unchecked, and yeomanry and peasantry dwindled and disappeared from the face of the land in many parishes.

In 1604 Trigge's "Humble Petition" tells the

[1] STRYPE'S "Memorials."

same tale that More and Latimer had told: "There is a mighty Thorn sprung up of late in divers places of this realm—I mean inclosures of fields and commons: whereas the Lords of Manors and Freeholders will have all their lands which have heretofore lien open, and in common (so that the poor might enter common with them), now laid together in several. And hereby the poor cannot enjoy their ancient commons and liberties. And this cankered Thorn also devoureth God's people, which is his inheritance."

The confiscation of the monasteries, followed by the general spoliation of every kind of charitable foundation, and the seizure of the properties of the guilds increased the miseries a thousandfold.

To the successors of the monks and friars land was capital and nothing else, and so they were harsher landlords and sharper business men in every way. Here again contemporary evidence is overwhelming.

Brinklow called the monks "imps of Antichrist," but confessed that "they never enhanced their lands, nor took so cruel fines as do our temporal tyrants."

Lever, and Latimer, and Bernard Gilpin all give similar testimony.

The old landmarks were gone by the middle of the sixteenth century. The monasteries with their hospitality were ended. The parish churches were despoiled of their ornaments the people had provided. The funds of the guilds had been seized, and to realise what that meant we have only to imagine the Government of our day proscribing all friendly societies, trade unions, and co-operative societies, and annexing their properties. The Church of England had been separated from the rest of Catholic Christendom, and the new Prayer Books of Edward VI. substituted for the old familiar services of Mass and Evensong.

"The foundations upon which society had been based for 500 years were broken up, the ideas which dominated it passed away, and those which were to regulate the new society were still without form and void. The change was neither begun nor ended during the Tudor period, but that age felt more severely than any other the stress and the shock of the revolution."[1]

The "increase in national wealth was purchased by the pauperisation of large sections of the community,"[2]—a condition of things repro-

[1] A. F. POLLARD, "England under Protector Somerset."
[2] *Ibid.*

duced at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and inevitable, when the people are landless, at every fresh improvement in labour-saving machinery.

A debased coinage, the rise in prices, and the fall in wages all added to the agony of the working people at the beginning of Edward VI.'s reign.

Froude summed up the distress of the country people :

" It remains certain that the absorption of the small farms, the enclosure system, and the increase of grazing farms had assumed proportions mischievous and dangerous. Leases as they fell in could not obtain renewal : the copyholder, whose farm had been held by his forefathers so long that custom seemed to have made it his own, found his fines or his rent quadrupled, or himself without alternative expelled. The Act against the pulling down farmhouses had been evaded by the repair of a room which might be occupied by a shepherd ; a single furrow would be driven across a meadow of a hundred acres, to prove that it was still under the plough. The great cattle-owners, to escape the sheep statutes, held their stock in the names

of their sons or servants; the highways and the villages were covered in consequence with forlorn and outcast families, now reduced to beggary, who had been the occupiers of comfortable holdings; and thousands of dispossessed tenants made their way to London, clamouring in the midst of their starving children at the doors of the courts of law for redress which they could not obtain." [1]

The harshness and rapacity of landlords, no longer restrained by religion or by sense of social obligation, and bent only on getting rich as quickly as possible, had their counterpart in the unscrupulous energies of the traders. Fraud and adulteration were rife in the towns, and Parliament was as impotent to deal with these prosperous business men as it was to hinder the enclosures.[2]

[1] "History of England"—*Reign of Edward VI.* Without acknowledging Froude as a reliable authority on matters of fact, and without holding his opinions in respect, we may note this confirmation of the contemporary view.

[2] "Another symptom of ill-regulated competition—the sale of fraudulent goods—is very apparent in the statutes of the Parliaments of Edward VI. These include an Act for the true currying of leather, another for the true tanning of leather, an Act for the true making of malt, an Act against the false forging of 'gadds of steel,' an Act for the true making of woollen cloths, an Act for the true stuffing

"Lady Avarice," as Bernard Gilpin put it, "was set on work altogether."

Paget, writing to Protector Somerset, found neither religion nor law in the land: "Society in a realm doth consist and is maintained by means of religion and law, and these two or one wanting, farewell all just society, government, justice. I fear at home is neither. The use of the old religion is forbidden, the use of the new is not yet printed in the stomachs of eleven or twelve parts of the realm." [1]

Yet, if law was despised by landowners, it could still be made effective against the poor. Parliament in Henry VIII.'s reign brought in the lash and the gallows to solve the "unemployed problem." Punishment seemed the right thing for people, homeless and landless, for peasants dispossessed of holdings, for soldiers broken in the French Wars.

In 1531 an Act of Parliament allowed licences for begging to be granted to the impotent, and ordered a whipping for all other mendicants. Five years later, in the year of the suppression of

of feather beds, mattresses, and cushions, an Act for the true 'fulling and thicking' of caps, and other statutes with similar objects."—POLLARD, "England under Protector Somerset."

[1] State Papers, Edward VI., Domestic.

the lesser monasteries, Parliament, finding the unemployed still alive, decided to deal more radically with the problem. So on the first conviction of unemployment all vagrants, men, and women alike, were to be whipped; for the second offence they were to be mutilated; and on the third conviction they were to be hanged as felons. This Act of 1536 was rigidly enforced and thousands of unemployed men and women suffered the full penalty of the law. And still the "unemployed problem" remained unsolved, so that it was said that only by sterner measures and greater severity could the question be settled.

Therefore, in 1547, the first year of Edward VI., an Act was passed selling the unemployed into slavery. For a first conviction branding and two years of slavery was ordered for the unemployed vagrant; the "slave" was to be beaten and chained by his master, and for running away he was to be further branded and adjudged a "slave" for ever. Death as a felon was the penalty for a third conviction.

Even this measure, drastic as it was, failed to rid the country of the unemployed. Moreover, people were found in that first year of Edward VI. to dislike the enslavement of free-born men

Wymondham Church

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and women. Government it seemed had got rid of papal authority only to bring back slavery to England.

So in 1549 the Act of 1547 was repealed, and the Act of 1531 was once more the law of the land.

In that year, 1549, came the great risings in the West of England and in Norfolk, and many smaller risings elsewhere. To Robert Kett, the Norfolk leader, it seemed as though Protector Somerset would really order something more hopeful for the peasants than hanging and flogging, and the landowners, on their side were equally distrustful of the Protector's plans. As it turned out, Somerset accomplished nothing for the peasants, and only ruin for himself, but his policy distinctly encouraged the yeomen and peasants to hope for redress of their wrongs, as it as distinctly filled the landowners with wrath.

Cardinal Wolsey, in the heyday of his power, had also attempted to save the countryside from the growing power of the landlords. His inquisition of 1817 included the counties of Oxford, Bucks, Northants, Berks, and Warwick, and reported large enclosures of common lands, and the eviction of several hundreds of people.[1]

[1] It seems impossible to get at any accurate figures as to the actual number of persons evicted or of acres enclosed.

Restitution was ordered to be made for all enclosures carried out since 1485, and the King's pardon might be pleaded. There the matter ended. The landowners neither restored lands, nor ceased from enclosing—though at the dissolution of monasteries, so many estates were enlarged [1] that for a few years common lands were left untouched in many places. On the death of Henry VIII., there is a vigorous renewal of enclosures.

Where Wolsey had failed it was unlikely that Somerset could succeed, especially at a time of social anarchy, with the nation rent and distracted by a violent revolution in religion. Besides, Somerset was hardly the man to accomplish the work he proposed. His own annexations of Church lands were notorious. A parish church, and part of St Paul's Cathedral, were sacrificed for the building of Somerset House,[2] and the Protector, by bidding for the support of the poor—for whom he possibly had a quite real sympathy—stirred to fury his enemies on the Council, notably the Earl of Warwick.

[1] One fifteenth of the land of England changed hands at the Dissolution, 1536–1539, according to Cheyney.

[2] It was said that he also desired to pull down Westminster Abbey for the same purpose.

On 1st June 1548 the Proclamation against enclosures was issued,[1] and within a few weeks commissioners were sent down into the counties of Oxford, Berks, Warwick, Bedford, Leicester, Buckingham, and Northampton to make inquiries as to the number of acres enclosed or converted from arable to pasture since 1485, and to disclose the names of all who kept more than 2000 sheep, or who had broken the law.

The Commissioners, amongst whom were Fulke Greville, Sir Francis Russell, and John Hales, were exhorted in case they were themselves offenders, " first, for example's sake, begin to the reformation of yourselves. Whereby you shall both have the better credit, and may with the more boldness proceed to the redress of others."

" Let the commissioners do their duty bravely, and the world would be honest again," Somerset wrote with brave optimism. " The great fines for lands would abate, all things would wax cheap ; twenty and thirty eggs would again be sold for a penny, as in times past; the poor craftsmen could live and sell their wares at reasonable prices ; and the noblemen and gentlemen who had not enhanced their rents would be able once more to maintain hospitality."

[1] See Appendix.

The Commission, welcomed by the yeomen and peasants, was frustrated by the landowners. John Hales, the one man really zealous for the people, writes bitterly to Somerset concerning the attitude of the landowners and the methods employed to prevent the facts being published :

" After the King's Majesty had sent forth the proclamation and commission, what did they not to hinder it ? Some found the means to have their servants sworn in the Juries, to the intent to have them hazard their souls to save their greediness. And as I have learned since, it is not possible in any of the Shires where we were, to make a jury without them, such is the multitude of Retainers and hangers-on. Which thing if it be not remedied the King shall be sure never to have his laws truly executed. . . . Some poor men were threatened to be put from their holds if they presented, some also as I farther learned have no certainty of their holds which were wont to be let by copy for life and otherwise for years, because they at no time nor in nothing should offend their landlords but do and say whatsoever they will command them. As it pleaseth my landlord, so shall it be ! A godly hearing in the commonwealth ! Some also were indicted because they presented the truth, and some were persuaded that the end of the commission should be but a money matter, as it had been in times past. I could declare unto you a great many slights wherewith some of them thought to have blinded us and the presenters, but for very shame I will let them pass." [1]

Hales also brought in three agrarian Bills in Parliament, for the rebuilding of houses fallen

[1] STRYPE'S " Memorials."

into decay, and for the maintenance of tillage and husbandry. The first bill was introduced in the House of Lords and quickly rejected. The second passed the Lords, but was lost in the Commons. The third, introduced in the Commons, never reached the Lords.

The report of the Commissioners, presented in the form of a petition to Parliament, declared the population diminished, the farmer and labourer impoverished, villages destroyed, towns decayed, and the labouring classes generally reduced to great suffering. It urged that landowners should not farm any portion of their estates beyond the needs of their households; that the great farms should be broken up; and that a moderate fine of ten marks should be exacted from all who were breaking the law in the matter of enclosures.

But Parliament would do nothing, the landlords ignored the Commission and its report, and the only result of Somerset's policy was a growing restlessness amongst the country people, and his own unpopularity with the nobility.

In the spring of 1549 Somerset ordered another commission to enforce the Enclosure Acts, and issued another proclamation. The people were now "plucking down pales hedges, and

ditches at their pleasure," and Somerset, to allay these disorders, promised that the commission should redress their wrongs. Since "a great number of rude and ignorant people, in certain shires of England, had done great and most perilous and heinous disorder, and had riotously assembled themselves, plucked down men's hedges, disparked their parks, and taken upon them the King's power and sword, but had now repented of their evil doings," their pardon was announced, but at the same time death was threatened to all who should henceforth make similar disturbances.[1]

Sir William Paget told Somerset plainly that this lenient policy was wrong: "Your pardons

[1] Edward VI., Proclamations. Many popular ballads of the time express approval of the pulling down of hedges and fences:

"Cast hedge and ditch in the lake
Fixed with many a stake,
Though it were never so fast
Yet asunder it is wrest.

Sir, I think that this work
Is as good as to build a kirk,
For Cambridge bailies truly
Give ill example to the country:
Their commons likewise for to engross
And from poor men it enclose."

See C. H. Cooper, "Annals of Cambridge."

have given evil men a boldness to enterprise, and cause them to think you dare not meddle with them, but are glad to please them, and to suffer whatsoever they list, and what pleaseth them, be it right or wrong, they must have it." [1]

Writing again early in July Paget still harps on the same point: "I told your Grace the truth, and was not believed: well, now your Grace seeth it, what saith your Grace? Marry, the King's subjects [are] out of all discipline, out of obedience, caring neither for Protector nor King, and much less for any other mean officer. And what is the cause? Your own levity, your softness, your opinion to be good to the poor. The opinion of such as saith to your Grace, 'O Sir, there was never man that had the hearts of the poor as you have. Oh! the commons pray for you, sir: they say, God save your life.' I know your gentle heart right well, and that your meaning is good and godly: howsoever, some evil men list to prate here that you have some greater enterprise in your head, that lean so much to the multitude. I know, I say, your good meaning and honest nature. But I say, sir, is it great pity (as the common proverb goeth in a warm summer) that ever fair weather

[1] State Papers, Edward VI., Domestic.

should do harm. It is pity that your so much gentleness should be an occasion of so great an evil as is now chanced in England by these rebels. . . . Where is the law used in England at liberty? Almost nowhere. The foot taketh upon him the part of the head, and commons is become a king, appointing conditions and laws to the governors, saying, 'Grant this and that, and we will go home.'" [1]

Paget had been in alliance with Somerset from the death of Henry VIII., and he goes on to warn the Protector of the natural hatred of the lords of the Council to any sympathy of the Government with the troublesome peasants: "I know in this matter of the commons every man of the council hath misliked your proceedings, and wished it otherwise. I know your Grace can say, 'No man shall answer the King for these things but I.' O Sir, I fear me, that if you take not another way betimes in these matters of tumult, neither you nor we shall come to answering."

Paget's proposed cure for the disorders is, that the Council should meet, the German mercenaries be recalled from Calais, Lord Ferris and Sir William Herbert be sent for from Wales

[1] State Papers, Edward VI., Domestic.

with "as many men as they dare trust," and that the Protector should go himself with as many noblemen and others as could be mustered into the disaffected counties, accompanied by the chief justices of England, and there "attach to the number of twenty or thirty of the rankest knaves of the shire. Let six he hanged, the ripest of them, the rest remain in prison." [1]

But when this letter was written Cornwall and Devon were in open revolt against the new Prayer Book, and the new form of Church service—which the people likened to a "Christmas game"—and were fighting for the restoration of the Mass and the old Catholic order in the churches; while in Norfolk the great uprising under Robert Kett had already commenced.

Somerset had said openly, concerning the attacks on enclosures, that he "liked well the doings of the people," and that, since "the covetousness of the gentlemen gave occasion to them to rise, it were better they should die than perish for lack of living." [2] But the nobles and country gentlemen, furious at the attempts of Somerset to restore the enclosed land and at the boldness of the peasants, wherever they were

[1] State Papers, Edward VI., Domestic.
[2] FROUDE, "Reign of Edward VI."

strong enough repulsed the latter by force of arms.

That Robert Kett, with many of the country folk, were convinced that Somerset was with them against the landlords seems plain. But Somerset, by July 1549, was tottering to his fall. He could neither support the rebels nor yet recover their allegiance. Strongly Protestant, the Catholic Rising in Cornwall and Devon was particularly hateful to him. Riots to enforce the laws against enclosures were one thing, an open rebellion, whether religious as in the West, or purely agrarian as in Norfolk, was another. The Protector won the hatred of the Earl of Warwick and the landowners by his commissions and proclamations against enclosures; he lost all favour with the mass of people by the inevitable savagery which followed the suppression of the risings.

Over and over again in the first half of the sixteenth century the people rose in revolt, sometimes on behalf of the Catholic religion against the Government changes in the Church services, more often against the social and economic changes that were depopulatang rural England.

The " Pilgrimage of Grace " in 1536, and the

rising in the West in 1549, were the chief demonstrations against the destruction of the old order in religion, and were no more successful than the social revolts.

In 1527 and 1529 bad harvests followed by famine provoked agrarian riots in Norfolk. In 1537, at Walsingham, Sir Nicholas Myleham, George Gysborough, and others attempted to "procure and make an insurrection," hoping to make a remedy for the "much penury and scarceness" that prevailed. Also "they thought it very evil done for the suppressing of so many religious houses where God was well served and many other good deeds of charity done."

The rising was put down before anything was done, and a woman, one Elizabeth Wood, at Aylsham was arrested in connection with this revolt for saying that "It was pity that these Walsingham men were discovered, for we shall never have a good world till we fall together by the ears :

> "And with clubs and clouted shoon
> Shall the deed be done":

for we had never had a good world since this King reigned."

Myleham and Gysborough were executed at

Norwich, and Sir John Heydon wrote to London concerning the "detestable and traitorous" words of that "ungracious woman." But the fate of Elizabeth Wood is not recorded.

In 1540, John Walker of Griston set about rousing the people to the following effect :—

"If three or four good fellows would ride in the night with every man a bell, and cry in every town that they pass through, 'To Swaffham! To Swaffham!' by the morning there would be 10,000 assembled at the least; and then one bold fellow to stand forth and say, 'Sirs, now we be here assembled: you know how all the gentlemen in manner be gone forth, and you know how little favour they bear to us poor men: let us therefore now go home to their houses, and there shall we have harness, substance, and victual. And as many as will not turn to us, let us kill them, yea, even their children in the cradles: for it were a good thing if there were no more gentlemen in Norfolk than there be white bulls.' And, if we have a sufficient number, let us go towards Lynn, and we shall be good enough and strong enough, for all them at their coming home out of the north, and they that will not turn serve them all alike, and all

them that dwell in our county. The best we might do were to begin with Mr Southwell, and from them to Mr Brampton, and to Mr John Brays, and Mr Hoggston, and so to Sir Roger Townsend, for he is still at home, and so to spoil them all as we go, and harness ourselves. And, sirs, if you will take upon to play this act with the bells by night, you shall have horse of me and no man shall know you."

These somewhat forcible proposals were not, however, carried out, and John Walker paid the penalty for his free opinions.

But these years with their petty outbreaks all gave evidence of the general unrest, and in the " Kett Rebellion " of 1549 culminated the long pent-up sense of injury, the knowledge of ruin unjustly earned, the hatred of landlord tyranny, and the hope of restitution.

The Rebellion itself failed in the end, but it is to be distinguished from other agrarian revolts by the serious efforts made by its leaders to establish some sort of social commonwealth. Kett made no march on London, as Wat Tyler and Jack Cade had done, but he did set up a real tribunal, rough but effective, of law and order in the camp at Norwich ; and there was confidence misplaced, but sincere, that Protector

Somerset would treat the rising with consideration.

But in July 1549, with Cornwall and Devon ablaze for the return of the Mass in the parish churches, and with priests hanging from countless church towers and steeples not only in the West but also in Oxfordshire, with the peasants taking the law into their own hands in the counties of Somerset and Lincoln, in Essex and Kent, in Wilts and Buckingham, it was impossible for the Protector to countenance an armed insurrection in Norfolk—however fiercely the fires of that insurrection had been fanned by years of misgovernment. Were ever a people so driven to take up arms for life and liberty as were the English country folk in that year of grace, 1549?

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II

THE BEGINNING OF THE RISING

"The occasion of this rebellion was, because divers lords and gentlemen, who were possessed of abbey lands, and other large commons and waste grounds, had caused many of those commons and wastes to be enclosed, whereby the poor and indigent people were much offended, because thereby abridged of the liberty that they formerly had to common cattle, etc., on the said grounds to their own advantage."—BLOMEFIELD, *History of Norfolk.*

"By bearing a confident countenance in all his actions, the Vulgars took him (Kett) to be both valiant and wise, and a fit man to be their commander."—SIR JOHN HAYWARD, *Life of Edward VI.*

CHAPTER II: *The Beginning of the Rising*

The rising began at Attleborough on 20th June 1549. Here one John Green, lord of the Manor of Wilby, had set up fences and hedges round the common lands of Harpham and Attleborough belonging to his manor; and the inhabitants of Attleborough, Eccles, and Wilby and other neighbouring villages, hearing that the men of Kent had filled up ditches and pulled down fences, assembled together and vowed they would do the like in Norfolk. Straightway they threw down Squire Green's hedges, and laid the whole land where they had been wont to common open as before.

So the fire was kindled.

The people were without leaders and without organisation. But they were in sore straits, and could see nothing for it but to take the matter into their own hands. Some attempt at common action was made, and "at first, therefore, were secret meetings of men running hither and thither, and then withdrawing themselves for

secret conferences, but at length they all began to deal tumultuously and to rage openly."

A fortnight and more passed, and on 7th July came the annual feast at Wymondham, when folks gathered from far and near and a play was performed in honour of the festival of St Thomas of Canterbury, to whom a chapel—afterwards used as a grammar school—in the middle of the town was dedicated.[1] Henry VIII. had struck the name of St Thomas out of the calendar, and the funds of all the guilds had been confiscated, but the old Church plays were still performed in certain towns and villages for some years to come. 7th July was a Sunday and the people collected in great numbers in the town on the Saturday night. There was talk on all sides of the enclosures, and of the ruin and beggary overtaking the land, and much discussion as to the work at Attleborough. The spirit of revolt spread quickly. If the old common rights were to be saved then the people must act promptly, for every day saw fresh invasions and the planting of new hedges to keep the peasants off the land.

On the Monday, the play ended and the fair over, a great body of people set off to throw down the fences set up at Morley by one Master

[1] This chapel, long disused, still stands.

Hobart, and this done they proceeded to Hetherset, a few miles off, on the Norwich road, where Sergeant Flowerdew had enclosed many common lands.

This Flowerdew was an old enemy,[1] who had fallen into disrepute with his neighbours ten years before the rising. For when Henry VIII. had ordered the destruction of the abbey at Wymondham, the people, "desirous to save their noble church, petitioned the King, they paying for the bells, lead, etc., according to their value." Henry consented and the people paid the money, trusting thereby to have saved their church. But "the good intent was frustrated by Sergeant Flowerdew, who stripped the south aisle, and abbey vestry, and all the lodgings, the town vestry, and part of the abbey steeple, of all their lead, and carried away all the freestone from the south cross aisle, the chapel of our Lady, and the choir—which he demolished in a good manner."[2] Naturally by this proceeding Flowerdew had won the hatred of all who had worked and paid for the preservation of the church, and as the Ketts had been conspicuous

[1] Flowerdew's son was a Baron of the Exchequer in the reign of Elizabeth.

[2] BLOMEFIELD, "History of Norfolk."

subscribers, so were they Flowerdew's confirmed enemies.[1]

No sooner had the people begun to throw down Flowerdew's fences at Hetherset than the cunning lawyer suggested to the leaders of the invasion that it would be well to attack the Ketts, who, at Wymondham, had also made enclosures. Flowerdew even went so far as to pay 40d.[2] to the rioters, on condition that they should destroy Robert Kett's enclosure. The proposal to visit Kett was approved, and so it was actually at Flowerdew's prompting that Robert Kett was drawn into the rising.

Robert Kett and his brother, William Kett, were craftsmen. Robert is described as a tanner, and William as a butcher and (in the indictment against him) a mercer. Both were men of substance and of ancient family. Robert

[1] "This very thing was, in a measure, the beginning of the rebellion; for the Ketts, who were chiefly concerned in the purchase, and were very desirous of saving the church, being at that time the principal inhabitants, never forgave Flowerdew, but endeavoured to do him and his family all the prejudices imaginable ever after."—BLOMEFIELD. ("At Attleboro' in similar fashion the quire of the church had been pulled down by Robert, Earl of Sussex, in 1541, for the sake of the lead."—"Victoria County History.")

[2] Harl. MSS. 6021. 38s. 4d. in Hayward's "Life of Edward VI."

Kett held three manors from the Earl of Warwick, near Wymondham; and William had purchased two properties, Westwode Chapel and Chossell's Manor, in 1546. Robert's estate was valued at 1000 marks, and his yearly income at £50. For three centuries the Ketts had lived in Norfolk—sometimes they are called Cat, at other times Chat or Knight—and since 1483 they had been the chief persons at Wymondham.[1] But landowners and wealthy as they were, Robert and William Kett, when the call came, did not shrink from joining with the peasantry in the war against enclosures. They did more than this, they boldly put themselves at the head of the revolt, and gave their lives for the cause they espoused.

Robert Kett must have pondered the evil plight of the commonwealth of England, as other men were doing in the anarchy of Edward VI.'s reign. It would seem to him that Protector Somerset was in earnest to check the enclosures which were desolating the countryside, and that the people did well to enforce their demands for the old rights of commoning. The news had reached him of the doings at Attleborough and of the unrest all around. At pre-

[1] See Appendix, "Kett's Family."

sent the tumult was a local affair, differing in no great manner from the many disturbances Norfolk had seen of late. Was this rising to be put down by the strong arm of authority? Or was it possible that all East Anglia would rise, and that the young King and his minister would listen to the complaints of the people, and redress their wrongs? Could the rising achieve its purpose, and end the oppression of the peasantry?

One thing was plain to Robert Kett, the people lacked leadership and good counsel, and without these things no rising could be successful. The movement was spreading. Wisely led, the courage and resolution of the country people could accomplish much. But organisation and discipline were imperative. It was a forlorn hope, perhaps, at the best to take up arms in the cause of a landless peasantry, but there were good reports of Protector Somerset's sympathy with the cause. To lead the rising meant, for Kett, the giving up of the quiet yeoman's life at Wymondham, and plunging into the strenuous responsibilities of an insurgent camp, exchanging pleasant domestic ease for the thousand-and-one dangers and difficulties of open rebellion. No great promise of riches or glory or honour was

offered to the Ketts should the rising be successful. No personal gain would be theirs, no private wrongs of their own called for redress. Victory could but bring the satisfaction of a fight bravely fought, of the goodwill of poorer neighbours well earned, of a decisive blow struck at the evils of the time. Beyond these evils that cried aloud for attack, Kett had a vision of a fairer and happier England, when the pride of the rich should no longer oppress the poor, and when all should live in neighbourly and brotherly friendship. It was the old vision of the leaders of the Peasant Revolt in the fourteenth century, the old gospel of social revolution preached by John Ball, that inspired Robert Kett, and drew him irresistibly when the hour struck. Geoffrey Litster, and many another Norfolk man had gone to their deaths seeking the establishment of a social commune in 1381; at the worst it would be no more for Kett than the laying down of life in a good cause, as these men had done before him, should the rising fail. Better was fair death in a good cause than foul life.

Seeking to save their lives, avoiding and discouraging their landless neighbours in revolt, the Ketts would have remained unknown, indistinguishable from the ruck of the land-owning

class, dead for all time as far as history is concerned. Losing their lives willingly for the people, they have gained an immortality; for the story of the "Kett Rebellion" fills a famous page in English history, and the heroism of its leaders will be acclaimed as long as the love of brave deeds shall endure in England.

The Ketts did not instigate the rising. They seemed as other landowners, even to the extent of making enclosures, until the people called upon them for help. But they were men of strong convictions, passionately hating injustice, and ready for action.

The ambition may be despicable which clutches at sovereignty and rule; even more despicable is the weakness which flees leadership at times of peril or shrinks from taking command from fear of trouble.

With a full sense of responsibility Robert Kett made his answer to the crowd which gathered at his house at Wymondham on the Monday evening of 8th July. His own enclosures he would pull down at once; but more than that, he would join with them whole-heartedly in the removal of all enclosures, and together they would break the power of their enemies. From the first the rising is in Kett's eyes a social crusade

against the dominion of landlords, and this speech at the very beginning of his captaincy strikes the confident note of revolutionary enthusiasm.

"I am ready, and will be ready at all times, to do whatsoever, not only to repress, but to subdue the power of great men; and I hope to bring it to pass ere long that as ye shall repent of your painful labour so shall these, the great ones, of their pride.

"Many horrible things of late years have ye endured, with many wrongs and miseries have ye been vexed and afflicted.

"But I will that ye be of good cheer, for this so great severity, so exceeding covetousness, and so seldom heard of cruelty in all sorts, seem to be hated and accursed of God and men. Moreover, I promise that the hurts done unto the public weal and the common pasture by the importunate lords thereof shall be revenged.

"Whatsoever lands I have enclosed shall again be made common unto ye and all men, and my own hands shall first perform it." [1]

Then to bring the speech to an end Kett announces his willingness to lead the revolt.

"Never shall I be wanting where your good is concerned. You shall have me, if you will, not only as a companion, but as a captain; and in the doing of the so great a work before us, not only as a fellow, but for a leader, author, and principal. Not only will I be present at all your consultations, but, if you will have it so, always will I be your president."

Great were the shouts of rejoicing at these

[1] NEVYLLE.

words, and the enthusiasm became contagious. People surrounded Kett and hailed him excitedly as their leader. Fired with his spirit they believed a new day was dawning, for here was a landowner willingly helping to lay open the enclosures he had made and promising to do more ; and when such things happened it must seem that times were ripe for change in England.

The work of throwing down fences and filling up ditches was renewed with vigour on all sides. Before nightfall, Flowerdew at Hetherset was maddened by the knowledge that his 40d. had been spent, not only in vain, but to purposes very opposite to his hopes. For the people, after leaving Wymondham, were quickly back to level his enclosures, and all the irate Sergeant could do was to curse Kett as " a pest to his country," abuse him as " the leader of a parcel of vagabonds," and endeavour to discredit him with his new followers. The report was started by some one that Kett was withdrawing from the revolt, to others—who had not been at Wymondham—it came as a mere rumour that Robert Kett was joining with the rioters.

All were reassured next day (9th July) when Kett answered those who came to beg him to stand their friend as he had already promised

to do, that he would assist them utterly, and would be faithful to the office bestowed upon him.

"I will never lay down the charge," said Kett, "which the commonwealth has committed to me, until your rights have been won, nor is anything more dear to me than your welfare. Before all things else do I put your welfare and deliverance, and for these I am willing to spend not only my goods, but my very life, so dear to me is the cause in which we are embarked." [1]

Then it was told that William Kett, whose courage and daring were widely known, had decided to stand in with his brother Robert; rumour gave way to definite declaration that the Ketts were in command, and that already a movement was to be made and a host organised.

No time indeed was lost by the Ketts from the moment they gave themselves to the rising. In hot haste the march began. The highroad to Norwich was taken, and, the river having been crossed at Cringleford, the night was spent at Bowthorpe. Every hour saw fresh additions to the army, crowds of servants and numbers of unemployed, desperate men flocked to join their fellows.

[1] NEVYLLE.

Hitherto the authorities had taken no heed of what was doing, but to Bowthorpe came Sir Edmund Windham, Knight, High Sheriff of Norfolk, and proclaimed the people there assembled to be rebels, commanding them, in the King's name, to depart peaceably to their own homes. "Had not, however, his horsemanship been better than his rhetoric, himself had not departed the place; for, being greatly offended at his speech, they attempted to seize him; but, as he was well horsed, he brake through those that had compassed him in, and, escaping from them, hastened with all speed to Norwich about two miles distant." [1]

The temper of the people was rising; that same night many came in from the country round and from the city bringing such weapons as they could lay hands on, and Kett delivered a fierce harangue against the tyranny of the landowners.

"Now are ye overtopped and trodden down by gentlemen, and put out of possibility ever to recover foot. Rivers of riches ran into the coffers of your landlords, while you are pared to the quick, and fed upon pease and oats like beasts. You are fleeced by these landlords for their private benefit, and as well kept under by the public burdens of State wherein while the richer sort favour themselves, ye are

[1] NEVYLLE.

gnawn to the very bones. Your tyrannous masters often implead, arrest, and cast you into prison, so that they may the more terrify and torture you in your minds, and wind your necks more surely under their arms. And then they palliate these pillories with the fair pretence of law and authority! Fine workmen, I warrant you, are this law and authority, who can do their dealings so closely that men can only discover them for your undoing. Harmless counsels are fit for tame fools; for you who have already stirred there is no hope but in adventuring boldly."

It was plain to Robert Kett that the only cure for the social distress was to abolish once and for all the ascendancy of the landlord class, and make England a free commonwealth. Either the people must put down the landlords, or very soon the landlords would have the whole land in their possession, and the people would be held in hopeless subjection. Had not Acts of Parliament already been passed, making actual "slaves" of the poor, landless folk who walked the roads, men and women driven to vagabondage by the enclosures of the common lands, and the destruction of tillage in the old common fields? And was not Parliament busy, only this year, making it high treason for twelve or more persons to meet together, and calling it felony to break down enclosures—these enclosures which were at the root of all the misery?

Yet, for all his hatred of mastery and thraldom

and his love of social equality and brotherhood, Kett was, by nature, a law-abiding man ; and all through the rising his authority was exerted to maintain obedience to orders, to keep discipline in the ranks, and to curb all anarchy.

" The Rebels' Complaint," which was issued at this time, is the manifesto of the labouring agricultural people who made up Kett's army. Whether drawn up by Robert Kett himself or by some unknown scribe it is full of that spirit of social revolt which animated all Kett's utterances. There were but a thousand men, all told, at the beginning of the rising who set out with Kett ; but they were men of resolution, men of quite clear conviction that the wrongs and miseries of their age were intolerable, and that it was better to contend and die, if need be, for liberty rather than pass the days in the dull despair and shameful servitude that threatened them. The older men had seen the state of things get steadily worse for the country folk, year by year. The peasants were going under before the pitiless rapacity of the landlords. The law could not help them, and, before they were utterly submerged by the landlords, and every scrap of common land and vestige of liberty was lost, a last stand must be made, and

"Heaven and earth mixed together" in wars and tumults. So the Norfolk rebels published their "complaint" that all might know the cause of their taking to arms:

The Rebels' Complaint

"The pride of great men is now intolerable, but our condition miserable.

"These abound in delights; and compassed with the fulness of all things, and consumed with vain pleasures, thirst only after gain, inflamed with the burning delights of their desires.

"But ourselves, almost killed with labour and watching, do nothing all our life long but sweat, mourn, hunger, and thirst. Which things, though they seem miserable and base (as they are indeed most miserable), yet might be borne howsoever, if they which are drowned in the boiling seas of evil delights did not pursue the calamities and miseries of other men with too much insolent hatred. But now both we and our miserable condition is a laughing stock to these most proud and insolent men—who are consumed with ease and idleness. Which thing (as it may) grieveth us so sore and inflicteth such a stain of evil report, so that nothing is more grievous for us to remember, nor more unjust to suffer.

"The present condition of possessing land seemeth miserable and slavish—holding it all at the pleasure of great men; not freely, but by prescription, and, as it were, at the will and pleasure of the lord. For as soon as any man offend any of these gorgeous gentlemen he is put out, deprived, and thrust from all his goods.

"How long shall we suffer so great oppression to go unrevenged?

"For so far are they, the gentlemen, now gone in cruelty and covetousness, that they are not content only to take

all by violence away from us, and to consume in riot and effeminate delights what they get by force and villainy, but they must also suck in a manner our blood and marrow out of our veins and bones.

"The common pastures left by our predecessors for our relief and our children are taken away.

"The lands which in the memory of our fathers were common, those are ditched and hedged in and made several; the pastures are enclosed, and we shut out. Whatsoever fowls of the air or fishes of the water, and increase of the earth—all these do they devour, consume, and swallow up; yea, nature doth not suffice to satisfy their lusts, but they seek out new devices, and, as it were, forms of pleasures to embalm and perfume themselves, to abound in pleasant smells, to pour in sweet things to sweet things. Finally, they seek from all places all things for their desire and the provocation of lust. While we in the meantime eat herbs and roots, and languish with continual labour, and yet are envied that we live, breathe, and enjoy common air!

"Shall they, as they have brought hedges about common pastures, enclose with their intolerable lusts also all the commodities and pleasures of this life, which Nature, the parent of us all, would have common, and bringeth forth every day, for us, as well as for them?

"We can no longer bear so much, so great, and so cruel injury; neither can we with quiet minds behold so great covetousness, excess, and pride of the nobility. We will rather take arms, and mix Heaven and earth together, than endure so great cruelty.

"Nature hath provided for us, as well as for them; hath given us a body and a soul, and hath not envied us other things. While we have the same form, and the same condition of birth together with them, why should they have a life so unlike unto ours, and differ so far from us in calling?

"We see that things have now come to extremities, and we will prove the extremity. We will rend down the hedges,

NORTH SEA
NORFOLK
Scale - 10 Miles = 1 Inch
LINCOLN
CAMBRIDGE
SUFFOLK
Yarmouth
Lowestoft
Lynn
Castle Rising
Swaffham
Brandon
Thetford
Attleborough
Wilby
Buckenham
Hingham
Wymondham
Hethersett
Thorpe
Norwich
Aylsham
Cromer
Holt
Walsham
Blofield
Loddon
Clavering
Happing
Tunstead
Lodden
Acle
R. Yare
R. Wensum
R. Bure
(SMETHDEN)
BROTHER CROSS
NORTH GREENHOE
HOLT
NORTH ERPINGHAM
GALLOW
SOUTH ERPINGHAM
FREEBRIDGE
LAUNDITCH
EYNESFORD
TUNSTEAD
HAPPING
TAVERHAM
MITFORD
WALSHAM
WEST FLEGG
EAST FLEGG
(CLACKCLOSE)
SOUTH GREENHOE
(WAYLAND)
FOREHOE
HUMBLE YARD
HENSTEAD
LODDON
(GRIMSHOE)
DEPWADE
CLAVERING
(SHROPHAM)
(DISS)
(GUILTCROSS)
(EARSHAM)

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fill up ditches, and make a way for every man into the common pasture. Finally, we will lay all even with the ground, which they, no less wickedly than cruelly and covetously, have enclosed. Neither will we suffer ourselves any more to be pressed with such burdens against our wills, nor endure so great shame, since living out our days under such inconveniences we should leave the commonwealth unto our posterity—mourning, and miserable, and much worse than we received it of our fathers.

"Wherefore we will try all means; neither will we ever rest until we have brought things to our own liking.

"We desire liberty, and an indifferent (or equal) use of all things. This will we have. Otherwise these tumults and our lives shall only be ended together." [1]

In these plain and downright phrases the Norfolk peasants flung out their banner of revolt, and called their neighbours to the fray. Nor did they call in vain. Kett moved his camp to Eaton Wood hard by and hither came crowds of poor men on 10th July, while word of the rising was spread throughout the county. For good or for evil, for victory or defeat, for loss or gain, the countryside was rising against the enclosures, and no man could foretell the issue.

[1] NEVYLLE.

III

THE MARCH TO MOUSEHOLD

"This Kett was a proper person to be a ringleader of mischief. For he was of a bold, haughty spirit, and of a cankered mind against the Government."—JOHN STRYPE, *Ecclesiastical Memorials.*

"The peasant, whose pigs and cow and poultry had been sold, or had died because the commons were gone where they had fed, the yeoman dispossessed of his farm, the farm servant out of employ, because where ten ploughs had turned the soil one shepherd now watched the grazing of the flocks, the artisan smarting under the famine prices which the change of culture had brought with it; all these were united in suffering, while the gentlemen were doubling, trebling, and quadrupling their incomes with their sheep farms, and adorning their persons and their houses with splendour hitherto unknown."—J. A FROUDE, *History of England.*

CHAPTER III: *The March to Mousehold*

IDEALIST and visionary, Robert Kett was also a man of ready action with a clear eye to immediate necessities. A man with great qualities of generalship, able to command respect and obedience, skilful at organising—stern or kindly as occasion might demand. Humane, too, striving all the time to avoid bloodshed and civil war, and steadily forbidding all putting to death of those who were his prisoners. Inevitably the rebels were rough and headstrong in their dealings with landowners who fell into their hands, but no savage massacre stains the annals of the rising, and the spirit of murder was not at work while Kett and his men held the field.

Bowthorpe and Eaton Wood were quite unfit and inconvenient for a permanent camp, for Robert Kett's plan was to remain in arms until some attention was given by Somerset to the needs of the peasantry, and some definite assurance came from the Government that the wrongs of the country people should be put right.

Mousehold, a wide stretch of high ground, well wooded, and extending from Sprowston to Thorpe, lay to the north-east of Norwich, and this was the place Kett had in his mind for head-quarters.[1]

Meantime the citizens of Norwich heard with doubt and misgiving of the approach of the Ketts and their army. It was true the rebels mustered no very great number of men as yet, but they were a growing army ; by all accounts they were turbulent and wilful fellows, wanting in proper respect to the Mayor and Corporation of the chief town in Norfolk. Of this the citizens had direct evidence. For on their arrival at Bowthorpe the rebels had at once thrown down the fences round the Town Close, the common pastures of the city, so that now all men were free to graze cattle on these pastures, a right which the Corporation had decided should be confined to those who would pay one half-penny a week per beast to the common herdsman. And the report of this deed had drawn a good many persons from the city to join the rebels, these escaping secretly and " partly upon former talk at the game aforesaid, and partly

[1] A good portion of Mousehold Heath has been preserved for a public recreation ground.

upon sudden admonishment, were easily assentive to that rebellion." [1]

The Mayor of Norwich, Thomas Cod, went boldly out to Bowthorpe, and endeavoured by "offers of money and fair words" to get the people assembled there to disperse to their homes; but his efforts were to no purpose and he returned in vexation.[2] Important enough, in his native city, Thomas Cod was of no account to the country people of Norfolk; and though during the rising Cod did his best to impress his authority, as chief magistrate of the city, on the rebels, it seemed impossible for the people to treat him with the seriousness he desired. His very name became a jest in the camp at Mousehold. And then Cod himself was a man of no strong character or resolution—"a harmless man," his colleagues called him. He had all the city tradesman's love of peace and sense of submission to constituted authority. The idea of social freedom which inspired the Ketts was unintelligible to the Mayor of Norwich. At the same time he was too fearful for the property of

[1] N. SOTHERTON.

[2] "But his travell was in vaine, and therefore returned he back to the citie without hope to do any good with that unrulie rout."—HOLINSHED.

the city to fight openly against Kett. While doing his utmost to get soldiers from London for the suppression of the rising, Cod yet remained on friendly terms with Kett, and allowed himself to take part in the council of the leaders of the rising. On one point only did Mayor Cod show firmness—as long as it was in his power he would keep the rebels outside the city gates. To this end the mayor laboured from the day Kett appeared at Eaton Wood. He failed at last to preserve the city from rude invasion, but, nevertheless, Cod could always enjoy the satisfaction of having done all that a mayor could be expected to do for the safety of life and property ; and he had the comforting knowledge that, on the whole, the citizens of Norwich came off better than many a knight and squire in the county. Thomas Cod, in fact, was a typical provincial mayor. His policy was to keep on good terms with the rebels—working all the time to thwart their plans without incurring personal danger—until either the King's soldiers should arrive to put down the rebellion and arrest its leaders, or, should things so horribly turn out, the rebellion should become revolution, and its leaders win favour with the Government. More than once in that summer of 1549 at Norwich

the issue between Robert Kett and King Edward's Government must have hung in doubtful balance, in the sight of Cod and the city corporation, and the proper civic policy to be pursued under these circumstances was not easily discerned. In the end Cod emerged from the trouble unhurt in body, though broken in spirit, for he found frankly his public responsibilities too heavy for his shoulders when things were at their hottest, and left another to act the mayor's part in the city.

No more successful than the mayor was the embassy of Sir Roger Wodehouse. This genial knight, who lived at Kimberley, near Wymondham, came upon Kett's army after it had struck camp at Eaton Wood, and was on its way to Mousehold. Sir Roger, a spirited little man, was confident that, being a neighbour of the Ketts and a well-known country squire, he could get the rebels to disperse if he went the right way to work. So, with a retinue of servants, and with three carts, two laden with beer and a third with provisions, he arrived upon the scene. Glad enough of the provisions and the good Norfolk ale were the rebels, but when Sir Roger besought them to break up their army, and turn from their unruly purpose, he was jeered at for

his pains, roughly handled, and after coming near being slain, was finally carried off a captive in the train of Robert Kett. Sir Roger was short of stature but of high mettle; aided by his body servant he put up a fight, and it was not till he had been stripped of his apparel, and driven into a ditch by Hellesdon Bridge, that the knight acknowledged himself beaten.[1] And that was the end of Sir Roger Wodehouse's mission. The men who had gathered round Kett were out on far too grave an errand to be diverted by a handful of money from the mayor, or a cartful of beer from Sir Roger Wodehouse. The rising was to end the enclosures that were going on, or was to be itself only ended by death. Nothing but death should turn them from their purpose the rebels vowed. Besides, many of them

[1] Blomefield quotes the following extract from the Wodehouse Pedigree in reference to this affair :

> "His son Sir Roger was, that little hight,
> Who what he wants in bulk makes up in spright ;
> Which caused him to resist the Rebell rout
> Of Kett and his comrades, who were about
> To maim him, but's man Edgerly the stout
> Him rescued, whilst courageously he fought—
> His servant's valiant act and loyaltie
> He recompenced with forty pounds in Fee :
> Which at this day they enjoy, and still inherit,
> And to the house still keep their honest spirit."

were landless, homeless men, whose one hope of life lay in the success of the revolt.

Kett, having decided to move his army from Eaton Wood to Mousehold as speedily as he might, sent messengers to the mayor for permission to pass through Norwich.

"For that they were desirous of passing quietly through the city, because that way was the easiest and most convenient for them, and as they would not do harm or injury to anyone, they hoped he would allow them to do as they proposed."

But Mayor Cod, angered at the throwing open of the town enclosure, and annoyed at the failure of his efforts to disperse the rising, was in no mood to make concessions. His reply was a stern refusal.

"Since the disposition with which they were actuated towards the State was decidedly hostile, he would not allow them to pass through the city."

Not content with this, the mayor thought to improve the occasion by lecturing the messengers on the enormity of their conduct.

"He then upbraided them with 'many sharp and bitter checks for their disorders,' as men that were seditious, and desirous of disturbing or throwing all things into confusion. He further endeavoured to deter them from their enterprise by telling them that such attempts would more surely have a bad ending, as they would soon find by experience." [1]

[1] NEVYLLE.

So the messengers returned, disappointed, to the camp; and Kett, who was in no mind for a conflict with the citizens, being anxious to unite all whom he could in the common cause, both townsmen and peasants, and being utterly averse from civil war, decided that his army should go round by Drayton—to the north of the city—to reach Mousehold.

The river was crossed at Hellesdon Bridge—where the interview with Sir Roger Wodehouse took place—though many passed over on trunks and branches of trees which they flung across the water; and Robert Kett rested with his men at Drayton on the night of 11th July.

Meantime, while Kett and his army thus pursued their way, the Mayor and Corporation of Norwich had been sitting in solemn council, gravely discussing the situation. Some allusion to the proceedings can be found in certain items in the City Chamberlain's accounts. For instance, the sum of 40*s.* was paid to Edmund Pynchyn "for his costs riding to London in post and from thence to Windsor, to the King's Council with letters concerning the rising of the said people."

Another item runs: "For drink in the Council Chamber, the 9th and 10th days of July, 6d."—

a modest enough score considering the business on hand.

For the deliberations were very long and uncertain during those two days, and opinions were extremely divided as to what was best to be done.

" Some thought no time should be lost, but that they—the rebels—should be if possible dispersed at once, since, if they were not, it was likely they would, under the influence of their excited feelings, bring ruin upon the whole country.

" Others, however, thought that while the affair was one of the greatest danger it was one that needed the most careful consideration and the most prudent counsels to bring matters to a happy termination.

" ' It is very true,' they said, ' that this disposition to be quick in resisting them proceeds from a high and courageous spirit ; still we cannot help thinking it a rash and dangerous course to adopt—in fact, just that course, the whole praise or blame of which would depend upon the result, which at the best was doubtful, and most frequently was unfavourable. Wherefore, we advise that you fortify the city, appoint watch and ward, and dispose the citizens along the walls and in all suitable places. And since, by law, it is forbidden to collect an armed force without the King's command, we think no attempt should be made to put the rebels down, but that we ought to wait until we learn what his wishes are, and receive authority from him to act." [1]

The more cautious of the city fathers, falling back on the royal command against raising troops without warrant from the crown, had

[1] NEVYLLE.

their way on the council. No open hostility was displayed against Kett, and no force was enrolled to dispute his authority—since to enlist any such force was illegal. All that the Corporation did was to make some attempt at fortification, to order watch and ward to be kept, and to send messengers to the King describing the state of affairs in Norfolk.

There was considerable wisdom in not provoking Kett to battle, for the Mayor and Corporation could not rely on the inhabitants of Norwich to take united action against the rebels, and many of the town workmen had already gone over to Kett's side. But Norwich, by its passive resistance, fell under grave suspicion in London of being confederate with the rebels, and many believed the city favoured Kett's cause.[1]

Not more than one night did Kett spend at Drayton, and on the morrow St Leonard's Hill —formerly a place of pilgrimage, whereon the hapless Earl of Surrey had built a house—was reached, and the camp made at Mousehold. On the road from Drayton the dovecot of John Corbet at Sprowston was destroyed, because this keeping of pigeons had become an intolerable nuisance to the peasants, whose grain was de-

[1] Notably Sir John Cheeke in his "Hurt of Sedition," 1549.

voured by the multitude of birds. (The dovecot had formerly been a chapel dedicated to St Mary Magdalene, and it had been purchased at the recent spoliation of Church lands.)

Arrived at Mount Surrey, on Mousehold, to the west, below them, lay the city of Norwich, the river Wensum intervening. To the south were Thorpe Wood and the village of Thorpe. The Heath itself, largely wooded, stretched away to the north and east of the camp, three or four miles in length and breadth. It was an excellent decision to fix on Mousehold Heath for the camp. No better site could have been found. Unhappily for Kett and his army the advantage of position was all to be thrown away on the fatal day of battle.

Less than a week had elapsed since the feast day at Wymondham, and already Kett was encamped at Mousehold, with some 2600 men when the first muster was called. Then, with the firing of beacons and the ringing of bells, thousands came pouring into the camp from all the homesteads and villages for miles round. So that in a few days no less than 16,000 men were enrolled under the banner of revolt—vagrants some, others sturdy yeomen and peasants—broken and ruined men for the most

part—men in every case sworn to obey Kett's orders, and ready to dare all for the right to live.[1]

[1] "The discontented, the desolate and oppressed, those for whom no man had cared, had now their 'camp,' as such gatherings were called; and having this, great numbers from Norfolk, Suffolk, and other parts joined them daily; blazing beacons and pealing bells spreading the tidings that the men of Norfolk had raised a standard, round which all such might gather; and far and wide was the rumour sent, and thronging multitudes came pouring in from quiet villages and market towns—the peaceful abodes of humble rustics and simple-minded farmers, hitherto content with complaining, but now roused to action, as the distant beacon sent its glare across the landscape, or as the village bells, hitherto associated only with days of holy rest and happy times, forgotten now in the wild storm of social excitement in which they were living, summoned them away to join the bold spirits gathering on Mousehold Heath." —F. W. Russell, "Kett's Rebellion."

IV

THE OAK OF REFORMATION

"Twenty thousand men gathered round the 'Oak of Reformation,' near Norwich, and repulsing the royal troops in a desperate engagement, renewed the old cries for a removal of evil counsellors, a prohibition of enclosures, and redress for the grievances of the poor."—J. R. GREEN, *History of England.*

"These villains were so far from a due sense of their wickedness in plundering, imprisoning, and abusing their honest neighbours, and disturbing the public tranquillity that they had a chaplain, Conyers, Vicar of St Martin's, Norwich, to say morning and evening service, and pray to God to prosper their ungodly enterprise."—OLDMIXON, *History of the Reign of Edward VI.*

CHAPTER IV: *The Oak of Reformation*

And now Kett, having brought his army to Mousehold, was to show what manner of man he was, and what qualities of generalship he possessed.

It was one thing to lead a multitude of homeless folk to Mousehold Heath, to bring together 20,000 discontented, hungry men in revolt (for the numbers were soon swollen to 20,000); it was another to direct these stormy elements and carry out a definite policy of social change.

Plainly, Robert Kett was no mere demagogue. He was far more than a popular agitator, or the mouthpiece of revolt. He had from the first very positive and definite views of the work in hand, and at Mousehold he at once set about the fulfilment of his plans. On one thing he was determined, that justice should be done to the people of Norfolk, and that the present miseries of the peasantry should cease. Believing that Protector Somerset was in earnest to stop the enclosures and that the Government meant to deal fairly by the people, Kett sent off a petition

to the King, and set his camp in order at Mousehold. Two things were necessary—discipline in the rebel host, and an adequate supply of arms and provisions. Difficult as these matters were, Kett accomplished both and with rare success in the six weeks he held command. More than that, for those weeks at least he thrust the landlords of the neighbourhood from their rule, and curbed all seizures of the common fields. That he was a rebel Kett would not admit. It was not rebellion, he insisted, this work; it was loyalty to the commonwealth of England to free the country from the lawless power of the landowners. The rising was no wanton act of riot in Kett's view; it was a serious and responsible movement, and as far as possible it should proceed with every semblance of law and order. As for the victualling of the army at Mousehold, that should be done on Kett's authority by a levy on the landowners whose doings were the real cause of all the troubles.

Under a famous tree at Mousehold, called from that time the Oak of Reformation, Robert Kett sat daily to issue orders and administer justice.[1]

[1] It is impossible to identify the site of the Oak. The rebels occupied a very wide area on the Heath. In setting up the seat of authority beneath the Oak, Kett was

With him were associated William Kett, and three reputable citizens of Norwich—Thomas Cod, the mayor; Thomas Aldrich, an alderman, an old man "of good wisdom, and honesty, and well-beloved"[1]; and Robert Watson, "a new preacher, one in great estimation with all men." These three were constrained to join Kett not because they favoured his plans and approved the revolt, but because they hoped to keep the rebels from excesses, and by their influence prevent an attack on the city. Watson was a particularly persuasive person, and with Aldrich often preserved the peace between Cod and Kett.

"For that at each time the said Kett would by his sinister will with his adherents command any unlawful things to be done in the country, the said Thomas Aldrich did let and pacify the controversies therein. And also the said Kett willed the like doing in Norwich that did Thomas Cod let; and in that they together agreed not in,

but returning to the early practice of many a folk and shire moot. A considerable number of the hundreds of Norfolk met in the open air.

[1] Aldrich lived at Mangreen Hall, Swardestone, and was Mayor of Norwich in 1507 and 1516. He died in 1559. It was on the advice of Watson that Conyers was made chaplain to Kett's army.

that did Robert Watson, the preacher, by his persuasion let." [1]

But Cod, Aldrich, and Watson could not prevent Kett from arresting and fining landowners, throwing down enclosures, and from other "inordinate" acts. They thought it safer in every way to consent to what they were powerless to stop.

"In commanding precepts to attach gentlemen prisoners; others to provide viand for their return, that is bread, corn, and drink, some to be baked and brewed; others to go in commission to lay open common grounds; others to increase their numbers; in these things, the said Mr Codd, Mr Aldrich, and the said Mr Watson, were partly fain to agree, lest they, being out of favour and place, others might come to bring all out of frame that now might partly be well framed. And the rather they assented to keep the people in better order, during answer from the Prince what else they might further do." [2]

In addition to the three townsmen, Kett ordered that two men should be chosen from every hundred in the county to assist the tribunal at the Oak of Reformation; and the names of

[1] N. Sotherton.
[2] *Ibid.*

these deputies were published at the head of the "Requests and Demands" Petition which Kett sent to the King.[1]

This Bill of "Requests and Demands," which was signed not only by Kett but also by Cod and Aldrich, contained the grievances of the country folk in full. It was a lengthy document, and the petitions included the preservation of the common fields, the establishment of fair rents, the restoration of fishing rights in sea and river, the appointment of resident clergymen in every parish to preach and instruct the children, and the recognition of locally elected commissioners with powers to enforce the laws. One significant request was: "That all bondmen may be made free, for God made all free with his precious bloodshedding."

The "Requests and Demands" were studiously moderate and free from all revolutionary sentiment. They reveal a wide and detailed knowledge of the various hardships of the country people, and explain much of the unrest of the time. They offer proof that Kett, fiercely as he could declaim against landlord rule, and much as he might desire a social revolution, had

[1] See Appendix for Petition in full. Twenty-two hundreds elected deputies.

very clear notions as to the immediate and practical reforms that were needed in the county of Norfolk.

To the Bill of "Requests and Demands" came an early but evasive reply by the King—"who took it for a great indignity that these men should offer to treat with him as enemies lawfully holding the field; yet knowing right well that as good counsels gather strength by time, so upon a little respite, evil advices either vanish or grow weak," he sought "to win some advantage of time." [1]

Somerset enumerates in this reply what had been done for the redress of wrongs—the proclamation against excessive prices of victual, and the commissioners appointed for the "reformation of enclosures and of divers other things"; promises that Parliament shall meet in October—"against which time they should appoint four or six of their county to present bills of their desires," and that commissioners shall see to the reduction of rents, and the prices of wool. In the meantime "these disorders had given impediment" to the Protector's "designs," and the people were to "apply themselves to their harvest and other peaceable busi-

[1] HAYWARD, "Life of Edward VI."

ness at home, and not to drive him to necessity (whereof he would be sorry), by sharper means, to maintain both his own dignity and the common quiet." [1]

This reply, with a general pardon, was brought to Mousehold by a herald. "Herewith also the King sent his general pardon, in case they would quietly desist and dissolve; but it was all, unhappily, of no avail." [2]

Hardly could such reply avail. What availed it to the homeless and landless peasants of East Anglia to talk of applying themselves to harvest and "other peaceable business at home"? What hope was there for this long-suffering multitude in the promise that Parliament would meet to look into their grievances some months hence? Year after year had the people waited for help, while their state went steadily from bad to worse, their old rights and liberties vanishing before the advancing wave of landlord aggression. Now, at last, when they had been driven to take up arms, and had found a leader whom they trusted, something more definite than this royal reply was required to make them disperse. If there was to be no assistance

[1] See Appendix for Reply in full.
[2] HAYWARD, "Life of Edward VI."

from the King's Government in London, then, in the strength of their own arms must deliverance be wrought.

As for Robert Kett, this answer to his petition left him unmoved. It would be time enough when Parliament met and fulfilled these pledges for him to resign his charge. To give up the work now would be sheer folly. Over and over again had the people been fooled by royal promises, only made to be broken. What had been the fate of the peasants who trusted the given word and the royal signature of Richard II. at the time of the great uprising in 1381? What attempt did the Crown make to keep the promises it gave to the commons of Kent, when Jack Cade led them to London in 1450? If Protector Somerset were in earnest to help the people to their rights his task should be aided, not impeded, by the resolute action of people found striving for their rights. Popular indifference and a return to abject submission would provide Parliament with a fatal excuse for doing nothing, and would, besides, probably bring down heavy vengeance on the heads of all who had dared revolt.

To Robert Kett the path of duty was plain and unmistakable. He had pledged his word not

to lay down his command until the rights of his poorer neighbours had been won. He had vowed to spend not only his substance, but his very life, in the cause in which they had all embarked. Justice must be done, at least in Norfolk, whatever King or Parliament decided, and it should be done in the name of King and Commonwealth. It might well be that, if this one corner of England were cleansed of oppression, the fire of social regeneration would spread to other parts. Already there was news of the people rising in the counties of Buckingham, Oxford, Surrey, Essex, Kent, and Cambridge.

So Kett sat down to do justice and order his plan of campaign beneath the Oak of Reformation. It was "an old oak with great spread boughs," and these boughs "they laid over with rafters, and balkes across, and made a roof with boards."

To provide for the victualling of the camp Kett issued a warrant in his own name, and in the name of the deputies elected by the hundreds of Norfolk :

"We, the King's Friends and Delegates, give authority to all men for the searching out of beasts, and all kind of victual, to be brought into the camp at Mousehold whereso-ever they find it ; so that no violence or injury be done to

any honest or poor man : charging all men by the authority hereof that as they wish well unto the King and the afflicted commonwealth they be obedient to us his Delegates and unto them whose names are written below." [1]

Bodies of men armed with these warrants were sent out to the country houses in different parts of the county, and returned with cattle and corn, with money, and with guns and gunpowder. No resistance was made to these demands by the landowners, upon whom, indeed, terror had fallen, and no lives were taken.[2] By the smaller farmers Kett's men were victualled " with much private goodwill."

To prevent personal thefts, the people were

[1] " Nos Regis amici ac Delegati : pecoris et cujusvis generis commeatus conquirendi, necnon in castra Mousholdica deferendi potestatem omnibus concedimus, quocunque in loco deprehenderint, dummodo ne qua vis ant injuria honesto ac pauperi cuipiam inferatur. Cunctis ex imperio denuntiantes, prout honori ac Majestati Regiae, Reique publicæ afflictæ, provisum et consultum volunt, nobis Delegatis, et his quorum nomina subsequuntur dicto audientes esse."—NEVYLLE.

[2] " And first they went to old Paston Hall and got ordinance from thence, and so to Yarmouth and other places, and brought in forsan several pieces one and another, and came into Norwich for powder, and sent to Lynn and other places, and what they could get that were sent ; they brought with them, both shot, powder, armorie, corn, cattle, money, and everything else, and brought the greatest part to the Rebels'

strictly admonished " to beware of their robbing, spoiling, and other evil demeanours," and to make their account at the Oak of Reformation." [1] If those who had concealed any goods obtained by Kett's warrants were discovered, and the crime of so doing proved, they were at once committed to prison.[2]

It was inevitable that in the spoiling of the country houses some of the goods should not be handed over to the common store, but every case of private plunder that was detected was tried at the Oak, and every offender convicted of this thieving was punished.

After this the rebels began to arrest those landowners who were known to have made enclosures, and many of the county gentry fled for their lives.

To the citizens of Norwich, who were in doubt and anxiety at the tales they heard of the open spoiling of the gentlefolks, and who were only kept from a violent panic by the knowledge that Cod, Aldrich, and Watson were in daily conference with the rebel leaders at Mousehold, Kett sent word :

Camp, and some they converted to their private use." —N. SOTHERTON.

[1] *Ibid.*

[2] F. W. RUSSELL.

" We are the King's friends, and being unjustly oppressed, we have taken upon ourselves the defence of the laws and of the King's Majesty."

In order to maintain better discipline and order in the rebel host, Kett seized an opportunity of investing a number of his followers with the authority of magistrates. For a royal messenger, bearing commissions of the peace to various county gentlemen, falling into the hands of Kett's men, they at once deprived him of these documents before sending him on his way. Kett thereupon filled in the commissions with the names of certain trustworthy men whom he picked out, and these irregularly appointed magistrates co-operated with the delegates of the hundreds in the maintenance of order.

The Oak of Reformation was not only Kett's court of justice, " his King's Bench, Chancery, and all other courts," [1] it was also the place of prayer and preaching. Dr Conyers, vicar of St Martin's at the palace, in Norwich, the chaplain to the camp, read the prayers of the new Book of Common Prayer daily to such as would attend, and " grave persons and good divines " were wont to come out from the city and preach under the Oak, without let or hindrance. No

[1] BLOMEFIELD.

objection was taken when Mayor Cod and old Master Aldrich ascended this pulpit and endeavoured from time to time, "by all the persuasion and mild arguments they could think of," to discourage the rebels from violent courses, and in fact Kett allowed the full use of the Oak to any of the Norwich citizens who were minded to address his followers. But the preaching and remonstrances gained no sympathetic hearing.[1]

On one occasion Dr Matthew Parker, formerly chaplain to Anne Boleyn and at that time Master of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, who had been born and bred in Norwich, came out with his brother, Thomas Parker, Mayor of

[1] "The Mayor, Master Aldrich, and others would often go up into this Tree, and endeavoured by all the persuasion and mild arguments they could think of, to make them desist from this course, and leave off committing such outrages. There were also grave and learned Divines, that tried all ways possible to withdraw them from these wicked attempts, and to reduce them to peace and quietness, though at the same time they hazarded their lives by so doing. For the Mayor and other of the gentry, though they were admitted to the counsels of the rebels, for the better credit thereof, yet, if Kett was present, they were no better than Herb John in the pottage, having no influence on the consultations: but if he happily chanced to be absent, then they were like St John's Wort (so sovereign for sores and against the Plague itself), that they much mitigated the fury of their mischievous decrees."—BLOMEFIELD.

Norwich in 1568, to the camp of Mousehold.[1]

It was evening, and a discussion was going on between Kett and Cod. Kett was urging the Mayor to resign his office, or at least to give up the keys of the city, and Cod's reply was that he would sooner lay down his life than desert the city or fail in his duty to the king.

Parker's purpose was to preach to the rebels, but he found everybody interested in this question of Cod's resignation. A great deal of eating and drinking had also taken place that day in the camp (it was said that no less than 3000 bullocks and 20,000 sheep, besides swans, geese, hens, and ducks, had been already devoured in a week at Mousehold!), and the people were tired and hot, and altogether no one wanted to listen to Dr Parker that night. Parker in disgust declared the "common people" were drunk, and put off his sermon to the morrow, for preach he would.

Whatever may have been their condition overnight, the people were all at prayers, the Rev. Thomas Conyers "reading the Litany in the midst of them," when Parker appeared to fulfil his mission in the morning.

[1] STRYPE, "Life of Archbishop Parker."

Mousehold Heath

From the Painting by Crome

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So the doctor went up into the Oak and began his sermon by lecturing the rebels on their intemperance. He was shocked at the extravagance and luxury he had seen—that "things which for their sustentation they had brought into the camp should be so quickly consumed and spent!" and admonished them that "the fruits of the earth and the gifts of God ought not to be spoilt wickedly."

The preacher's second point was that "no private feuds ought to be avenged, no blood shed, and no man's life be taken. Even those they held as enemies ought not to be imprisoned or kept in bonds." In the third place, the people were exhorted "to cease from their enterprise and trust the heralds and messengers of the King." Then followed a glowing eulogy on the King, and the importance of postponing their demands till the King was of age: "Let them give unto the King due honour, even in his young and tender age, whereby they might use him hereafter, when he came to more ripe and flourishing estate (the valour and prowess of his ancestors being confirmed in him, and as it were, deep-rooted), with incredible delight and pleasure." [1]

[1] Wood.

And that was the end of the sermon, for the people would stand no more of this kind of preaching, and Parker had to leave off abruptly. He " touched them for their living so near, that they went near to touch him for his life."

The people had listened attentively enough at the beginning,[1] but Parker's admonitions were too much for them, and angry interruptions broke the thread of the discourse. Someone shouted out that the preacher was in the pay of the landlords, and the cry was taken up.

" How long shall we bear with this hireling doctor ? He's hired by the gentry, and so he comes with words for which they have paid him, and with his tongue bribed by them. But for all his prating we will bridle their intolerable power, and will hold them bound with the cords of our laws, in spite of their hearts." [2]

Things began to look awkward for the preacher, for threats were heard of shooting at him with pikes and arrows unless he came down from the tree.

" Since he hath spoken so finely, and powdered his sermon with such eloquent words and sen-

[1] According to Strype, Parker was " a most charming preacher."

[2] Wood.

tences, the best thing to do would be to pierce him with pikes and arrows, and so make him come down."

At these rude speeches Parker became "exceedingly afraid, and seemed to be in great danger"—the more so as some bold and impudent spirits actually pretended to prick the soles of his feet with their spears. But there was no real danger at all, and Matthew Parker was safe enough at Mousehold in spite of his unpopular preaching.[1]

Chaplain Conyers soon restored peace to his excited congregation, for "with three or four choristers he began to sing the *Te Deum* in English to solemn music, and the people, being ravished by the sweetness of which song, for they were unwonted to music, and being bewitched with these unaccustomed delights, by little and little were appeased."[2]

[1] "Afterwards, however, it was discovered that his alarm was groundless, since nearly all under the Oak highly honoured the doctor, loved and respected him exceedingly, and were very glad he had ventured into the Camp."—F. W. Russell.

Doubtless Parker was honoured in Norwich, but at the Oak the honour was not exactly conspicuous.

[2] Wood.

"During this uproar Kett's chaplain, seasonably and wisely (though very abruptly) set the 'Te Deum,' and with

Parker, finding the situation less disturbing, came down from the tree while the singing held the attention of the people, and made off with his brother from the camp, "to sing his part at home."

But Parker was not allowed to make his way home entirely unmolested. Going down the hill toward Pockthorpe Gate, a number of the rebels overtook the fugitive divine, and began to question him as to whether he had a licence to preach from the Crown, asking to see the great seal on his licence. However, Matthew Parker, knowing how vain and dangerous it was to talk to them, managed to escape quietly from these troublesome persons, while his brother Thomas "held them in discourse," and so reached the city unhurt.

Neither Parker nor the rebels were yet quite done with one another. For the next day[1] Parker preached in St Clement's Church, and took occasion, naturally enough, to deal with the rising. There were a good many of Kett's

the help of some singing men then present performed it so elegantly that the multitude (taken with the sweetness of the music) began by degrees to be appeased, and during the singing the doctor withdrew to sing his part at home." —NEVYLLE.

[1] Possibly Sunday, 14th July.

men in the church, and they said nothing while the service lasted. But they waited until Parker came out of church, and then they told him that he must deliver up his horses for "the service of the King," at Mousehold Camp: "therefore they bade him have them ready immediately after dinner, for they were about to use them presently." Now Parker had two good horses, and he was by no means disposed to give these up to the rebels. Though a clergyman, Matthew Parker was a man of cunning and resource, and he promptly outwitted the rebels. For, while he parleyed with them, he sent off a servant to take the shoes off one of the horses, pare the hoofs to the quick, and dress them with "green medicine." The other animal was to be rubbed with some nerve oil, and both were made to appear as though lamed with too much work and travel.

Then Parker invited the rebels to come and look at his horses, and the animals, lame and useless as they seemed, were brought out and led away as though to pasture. On seeing the state of the horses, the rebels gave up all claim to them, and Parker quickly found a cure for the lameness. The next day Parker sauntered out of the city on the west side, as though taking a walk,

and when he had reached Cringleford Bridge, two miles off, there were his horses waiting for him. At once he mounted, and rode off; and so, "by the goodness of God (when he had escaped all these garboyles and popular hurliburlies), at the length, being free from so great dangers, Matthew Parker came safe to Cambridge"—ten years hence to become Archbishop of Canterbury under Elizabeth. And never again while the rising lasted did Parker venture within Norwich or approach the camp at Mousehold.

With Parker's visit over, the first week of Kett's camp at Mousehold was soon ended.

Daily Robert Kett sat at the Oak to do justice, while his men scoured the country for arms and provisions, and brought in those landowners for judgment whom they could lay hands upon.

Kett, still anxious that the citizens of Norwich should take active part in the rising, continued to press the mayor to give up the keys of the city gates, but this Cod declined to do on any terms; and Kett, on his side, was determined to avoid an open quarrel with the mayor, if it were possible, and to trust to time to bring the citizens over to the side of the peasants. His

policy all along was a united Norfolk—townsmen and country folk combined against all who held with the landlords.

Nevertheless, conflict soon raged between the city and the rebel peasants.

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V

THE CONFLICT WITH THE CITIZENS

"Apart from the recovery of what the peasants thought was stolen property, their conduct was restrained and almost orderly. Rude courts were held by Kett and his reluctant assessor, the Mayor of Norwich, in the rebels' camp; and if the justice they administered was rough, it was probably as fair as that obtainable in the King's courts, where, according to the proverb of that day the law was ended as a man was friended."—A. F. POLLARD, *Political History*.

CHAPTER V: *The Conflict with the Citizens*

KETT was mistaken from the first in counting on sympathy from the city for the rising. It was true a certain number of town labourers and artisans joined the rebel army, but the wealthy citizens of Norwich were, all along, hostile to the movement. The turbulent doings of the rebels were a hindrance to trade, and the camp at Mousehold was a constant menace to the peace of the city. Without doubt the fact that Mayor Cod, old Alderman Aldrich, and the persuasive preacher Watson were with Kett was reassuring to timid minds, and as yet no positive injury had been done to life and property within the city. But who could tell how long it would be before things changed for the worse? Every day brought its news of fresh aggression on the part of the rebels. It was too evident they were utterly without respect for the county gentry, and had no reverence for learning. Dr Matthew Parker, the eminent divine and distinguished master of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, a man who had been a Queen's chaplain, and of

whom all Norwich was proud, had actually been hooted and chivied with ignominy by these unruly followers of Robert Kett! More than that, not content with seizing cattle and demanding arms and provisions everywhere, it was told that the peasants were arresting the gentlefolks, bringing them to the Oak on Mousehold to be tried as common offenders before Kett, and haling them to prison in the city and at St Leonard's Hill. Such high-handed proceedings were naturally a shock to the worthy tradesmen of Norwich.

There was irritation, too, in the spectacle of the rebels daily coming in and going out of the city as they pleased; for the city authorities had no force at their disposal to keep them out, and were still afraid of breaking the law which forbade the taking up of arms without the permission of the Crown. All that the mayor could do was to retain the keys of the city gates. Against his will the mayor supplied Kett with funds, when the latter insisted that the city must grant him money, since the work being done by the army on Mousehold was in defence of the liberties of the county.

Difficult indeed was the position of Mayor Cod. For the sake of the city he was constrained to keep on good terms with Kett, and hitherto no

rioting had taken place within the walls; but it was hard to have to show civility to a pack of rebels and traitors. Just as Kett trusted to time to bring all Norwich to his side, so Cod trusted equally to time to bring troops from London to end the rising. And both Kett and Cod kept an outward show of peace between the camp and the city, until the relations were strained to breaking point—which was exactly nine days after the arrival at Mousehold. An unsuccessful mission by York Herald was the direct cause of the rupture.

The city fathers had despatched a messenger to London at the very outset of Kett's march, and directly after Matthew Parker's visit another envoy, one Leonard Sotherton, a respectable burgess, went off to London on his own account,[1] to report to the King's Council and to beg for help.

Sotherton was summoned before the Council and told his story, and how the destruction of the city and of all the gentry was threatened. His one suggestion, however, was not the sending of soldiers to Norwich, but the proclamation of

[1] "For his own safeguard as others did the same."—N. SOTHERTON.

Sotherton was robbed on the road and subsequently received 56s. 8d. from the Corporation as compensation, according to the City Chamberlain's Accounts.

a royal pardon, "hoping that the offer thereof would both glad a great number of hearts that would have remorse of their rebellion and to cause the same to revert and return to their habitations as faithful and true subjects are wont to do."[1]

This advice seemed an easy way to the Royal Council—who "had their hands fully engaged other ways"—for ending the disturbance, and York Herald was at once sent off with Sotherton to Norwich, where they both arrived midday, 21st July.

In the meanwhile Cod and Aldrich had been protesting strongly to Kett against the arrest and imprisonment of the landowners, some of whom were lodged "in Norwich Prison (at the Guildhall), some in Norwich Castle, and some in Surrey place." Kett, convinced of the justice of the step, was unmoved by the admonitions of the mayor, and the rebels generally rejoiced at the downfall of those whom they said "had sought by all ways to oppress them."

Conscious that their own words carried no weight at Mousehold, the mayor and his colleagues now looked to the King's herald to have some influence with the rebels. Accordingly, on the

[1] N. Sotherton.

arrival of York Herald and after the partaking of some modest refreshment at the Council Chamber,[1] a move was at once made to the Oak.

York Herald was received with cheers on his approach to the camp, and the whole assembly of people listened attentively while he "did read and declare the King's most gracious pardon to all that would humbly submit themselves and depart quietly every man to his house to enjoy the benefit thereof."[2]

But the herald was not content with declaring a general pardon; he went on[3] to trounce Kett and all his company for their misdeeds, and, enlarging on his official message, threatened in the following forcible speech "all severity of punishment" for those who remained in arms:—

"Hearken all you that be here, and thou, Kett, captain of mischief, and as many of you as are present, give ear. Although the manner of our ancestors, and the dignity of this empire, and the majesty of the name of a King, seem to require, that you, which have wickedly taken

[1] "Bread, drink, fruit, and other things for Mr Mayor, his brethren and others in the Council House, 3s. 4d."—City Chamberlain's Accounts.

[2] SOTHERTON.

[3] WOOD.

upon you arms against your country, and have cast yourselves into open conspiracy and rebellion, having been put to flight by sword and fire, should receive due punishment for the wickedness which you have committed: yet notwithstanding, so great is the kindness and clemency of the King's Majesty, that those whose heinous offence craveth for condign punishment, of his singular and incredible favour, he will have preserved with safety. And therefore commandeth, that forthwith every man lay down his arms: that they forsake the camp and this den of thieves, and every one to depart to his own house. And if you have done this thing, being deceived, ye have your pardon, and warrant of impunity, of all the evils ye have done: but if ye shall remain in your former mind, and purpose of wickedness, he will surely revenge all the hurts and villainies that you have done, as is meet, and with all severity of punishment. Neither will he suffer any longer [to] remain, to the overthrow of the whole kingdom, the things that are to be cut off and cannot be healed."

For a moment the people standing round about the herald were moved by these words. Some shouted "God save the King's Majesty!"

and others " on their knees fell down giving God and the King's Majesty great thanks for his gracious clemency and pity." [1]

But to Kett all this talk of pardon, and this rating of them, for all the world as though they were disobedient schoolboys, were beside the mark. He waited for an assurance from the Crown that some immediate check would be placed on the tyranny of the landowners, and that justice would be enforced between landlord and tenant. This message of the herald's was no better than the message of the previous herald's. In neither case was any definite reply given to the Bill of " Requests and Demands." The grievances were left unredressed, and it was to get these grievances remedied that Kett and his company had taken up arms, and " mixed Heaven and earth together." As for giving up their camp and disbanding the army, to do so now would be to leave Norfolk to anarchy, for at least some method and order had been established at Mousehold. Moreover, in striking openly a blow at landlord rule Kett could not admit that he or his followers had done wrong ; rather they were taking steps to end the wrong.

[1] SOTHERTON.

Impatiently, but not without dignity, Robert Kett answered the herald :

" Kings and princes are wont to pardon wicked persons, not innocent and just men. We, for our part, have deserved nothing, and are guilty to ourselves of no crime ; and, therefore, we despise such speeches as idle and unprofitable to our business. I trust I have done nothing but what belongs to the duty of a true subject."

From the herald Kett turned to the host of men gathered before him and said a few words to reassure them of his purpose, and since in his case no promise of pardon was likely to hold good, to encourage their loyalty to their leader :

" And so, turning to his company, he desired them not to leave him, nor to be faint-hearted, but to remember with what conditions they bound themselves one to the other. For his part he was ready to bestow his life (if need were) for their safety."

At this speech the people cheered heartily for their captain, and it was plain the herald's errand had failed.

Then the herald, indignant at the answer he had received, denounced the rebels as traitors, called upon John Petibone, the sword-bearer of Norwich, who, with other notables of the city, was standing hard by, to arrest Robert Kett.

But to do this was manifestly beyond the city

sword-bearer's power. For at the word "arrest" the people began a stir on every side this way and that way, striving with no less stout and dangerous contention.[1] John Petibone had all the willingness in the world to obey the herald's command, but how could he and half-a-dozen elderly members of the Town Council, armed merely with brief authority, arrest Robert Kett, with whom were 20,000 desperate fellows? The thing was impossible. Ket must be left to his own devices.

So Mayor Cod, Alderman Aldrich, Sword-bearer Petibone, and the rest of the city fathers who had come to Mousehold escorted the herald back to Norwich. They were followed by a certain number of the rebels who professed repentance.[2]

Once within the city Cod ordered the city gates to be made fast, and "on the advice of his brethren, the Alderman, and others of the citizens, caused good watch and ward to be kept in especial at the dangerousest places." Then[3] the gentry imprisoned within the city by Kett were set free and invited to join the Mayor's

[1] Wood.
[2] F. W. Russell.
[3] N. Sotherton.

council of war. No sooner, however, were these prisoners released than it was found that many of Kett's men were in the city, and "request was made, therefore, that the gentlemen should be shut up in the Castle as before, lest peradventure the rebels, finding them abroad, should murder them. Therefore were they all called for and again committed to close prison." [1]

Were ever English county gentlemen so beset with fear as these poor craven-hearted landowners of Norfolk? With the exception of the fierce little Sir Roger Woodhouse, who remained Kett's prisoner, not a single landowner round Norwich showed fight or even ventured a remonstrance during the whole time of the rising, though in other parts of the county there were both spirited and successful attacks on the rebels.

With Norwich more or less under arms, in hourly expectation of a visit from Kett, all peace was now at an end between the camp and the citizens. Ten of the largest cannon in the city were posted on the castle ditches, and Kett pointed his guns from the hill overlooking Norwich. Firing commenced on that evening of 21st July, and the whole night "was (for the

[1] Wood.

most part) spent in fearful shot on both sides." [1] However, this "fearful shot" did little injury, for the distance on either side was too great for the range of the guns. Kett's cannon-balls brought "more fear than hurt to the city," and "the city ordnance did not much annoy the enemy." [2]

In the morning the citizens moved their ordnance into the meadows by the river on the east of the city, and Kett had his cannon brought to the bottom of the hill.

A last attempt at peace was made by Kett before the firing was renewed. Two envoys, Isaac Williams, tailor, and Ralph Sutton, hatter, came from the camp at Mousehold to the mayor, bearing a flag of truce. Their message was a request that the right of way through the city, by which means provisions were brought swiftly to the camp, should be restored to Kett's army; for the gates were now closed against all who would pass through. Let this free passage be renewed and a truce made for at least a few days; otherwise the passage would be forced and death and destruction dealt to the city.[3]

[1] Wood.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] "Our Captain Kett and his soldiers entreat of this city, and of you the Mayor and your brethren, peace and truce for a few days whereby we may have liberty (as the custom

To this threatening request Mayor Cod's reply was an uncompromising refusal; for the mayor was not without courage while he held command in the city. "He answered that neither to come or have nourishment of the city should be granted but defiance utterly as traitors." [1]

(According to Nevylle, the mayor made a much longer and more offensive speech than this, and replied to the envoys as follows:—"They were the most wretched traitors, guilty of all disloyalty and of unheard-of villainy. He would not, therefore, grant anything to their most iniquitous demands; nor, if he were willing, was it allowable to do so, especially as they were the most abandoned of men. That they had committed so many, and such intolerable villainies as to deserve the being not only shut out of the city, but also, if it were possible, thrust only beyond the pale of human nature itself. That they despised the King's Majesty, wasted the country, almost utterly destroyed the city of Norwich, had branded upon themselves and their posterity an everlasting mark

was of late) to transport victual through the city, which thing except ye grant, we will break into the city by force and destroy it with fire and sword."—NEVYLLE.

[1] N. SOTHERTON.

of reproach for villainy and treason, and that all parts had by their violence and crimes been harassed, polluted, troubled and laid waste. And yet you ask to be admitted into the city? To enjoy the rights of citizens? To share in their civil and religious privileges? To have your want of food relieved by them? What? Do you not repent of the crimes of which you have been guilty? Are you not, at the very least, ashamed of them? Verily, I know not whether they who have committed such acts are the more wicked, or they who made this request are the more shameless? Do you hope to obtain them from the Mayor? From whom lately you made to suffer the shame and disgrace of imprisonment? Do you hope to obtain them from this city? Have you not almost utterly destroyed it, and can you think it will help you now? But perhaps you think the citizens will aid you: just consider how you have treated them: have you not brought war upon them, with all its horrors; and do you suppose that they will supply you with corn and provisions to serve as food for your fury? What folly to entertain such hopes! Be off then, be off, and tell Kett, the leader of these abominable conspirators, that the citizens of Norwich will obey the King's

Majesty and not these traitors, wretches that no longer deserve the name of men; while, as regards myself, I think nothing of the dangers and horrors you are preparing against the city. Break in, lay waste, destroy, cut down, and overthrow, just as you please; but remember that God is the avenger and punisher of all such doings, and that sooner or later your consciences will prick you for the great crimes you have been guilty of—and remember also, that you will undoubtedly, and at no distant period, meet with the punishment you have by your madness and folly drawn upon yourselves." [1])

Immediately on the mayor's refusal being known Kett decided to force a passage and ordered the guns to be fired. The city replied from the other side of the river, but " for lack of powder and want of skill in the gunners, the ordinance was spent to small and little purpose."

Artillery proving useless, bows and arrows became the chief weapons of war within and without the city, and the want of skill in the

[1] It is difficult to believe this speech was really delivered by Cod. The city at that time had not been seriously damaged, and its mayor had not been imprisoned. Possibly Cod in after years made out that he gave this valiant reply, and so Nevylle put it down as authentic."

gunners was more than made up for by the desperate bravery of the invaders.

First the rebels tried to carry the gates (Bishopsgate, Pockthorpe, and Magdalen, probably) by assault. With loud outcries they rushed down the hill upon the city, but were withstood "every way" and especially by "bowmen." Though "they were shot at with great number of arrows," the rebels came on hotly. "So impudent were they and so desperate, that their vagabond boys, naked and unarmed, came among the thickest of the arrows and gathered them up, when some of the said arrows stuck fast in their legs and other parts."[1] These "vagabond boys, naked and unarmed," did more than come among the thickest of the arrows, for they "plucked out the very arrows that were sticking in their bodies, and gave them, all dripping with blood, to the rebels who were standing round, to fire again at the city," and this utter contempt of danger and weakness "so dismayed the archers (within the city) that it took their heart from them."[2]

At Bishopsgate an entry had been forced by noon, for the rebels swam the river, and took

[1] N. Sotherton.
[2] *Ibid.*

the city gunner by surprise ; so that he " feared to shoot there was so great a number about him ; and left his ordinance and fled." [1] (There was some excuse for flight, for the hapless gunner in charge at Bishopsgate was, like the rest of the gunners, on this occasion short of powder and not exactly proficient in the use of cannon.[2])

The flight of the citizens from the gates and walls then became general — " the rest that watched seeing themselves nothing to resist, also hastily departed "—and the rebels were quickly masters of the city. Kett's friends within Norwich certainly hastened the victory. There were cries all the morning in various parts of the city: " To arms, to arms, citizens, the enemy are within the walls." [3] The City Chamberlain's Accounts also mention that on 22nd July about eighty of Kett's men carried off gunpowder and pikes from the chamberlain's house.[4]

[1] NEVYLLE.

[2] " For want of powder the shot followed not, neither were the gunners perfect in the city to order their pieces." —N. SOTHERTON.

[3] NEVYLLE.

[4] " *Magdalen Day.*—Item. Here is to be noted that the next day being Mary Magdalen Day, the chamberlain's service done the night before, and specially for making of the gunshot, was bewrayed by John Fishman to traitor Kett, so that he sent to his house about 80 men, of which

The Conflict with the Citizens

It does not appear that any grave loss of life occurred over this taking of Norwich by the rebels, or that the citizens suffered any hurt to their property. (It was ten days later, after the defeat of Lord Northampton, when miseries fell upon the city.) Nevertheless, York Herald, whose "commission served for two days," could not bear to depart leaving Kett in authority, and was moved to make a final appeal to the rebels to disperse. Accompanied by the mayor and many important citizens, followed by a large crowd of people, the herald went into the market-place, and there repeated solemnly the warnings and promises of the previous day.

number Robert Ysod, tanner, John Barker, butcher, Echard, miller of Heyham, were chief messengers, which persons carried the chamberlain to the Guildhall, and they took away one whole barrel of gunpowder and a remnant of another barrel that he left the night before, and certain iron pellets and lead pellets that served for the iron sling, and certain morris pikes that lay over the assembly chamber and compelled him to pay for line and a maunde (hand-basket) to carry the said pelf, 6d.

"Item they came again to the chamberlain's house, and took from thence 120 pellets of lead that were made the night before, and also they took from him in corn, paper, and serpentine powder of his own goods to the sum of £6 and odd money, and besides that compelled him to pay for a new ferkin to put in the gunshot, 5d, and for line to truss and carry the pelf with, 3d."—F. W. Russell.

Once more he bade them lay down their arms, leave the camp, depart severally to their own homes, and rely on the mercy and pity which the King was so ready to show them; if they would do this then should they be safe and free from all fear of punishment; while, if they remained in arms, they had nothing to expect but "grievous torments, bitter death, and all extremity."[1] But the rebels had grown impatient of threats and preaching, and were excited at the victory they had won. All the way to the Market Cross the crowd "shouted, and howled and cried as though they had won their purpose"—to the great astonishment of the herald.[2] The appeal of the herald was heard with open contempt, and the herald himself bidden to be off. There was none of yesterday's inclination to heed the promises of pardon.

"Depart with a plague on thee!" cried the rebels. "To the devil with these idle promises. He must be mad to think to get round us with fine speeches, so as to bring us to ruin. We shall only be oppressed in the end. We detest such mercy which, under pretence of pardon, would cut off all hope of safety and self-preservation."

Thereupon the herald did depart, not indeed with a plague but with eight good pieces of

[1] N. SOTHERTON.
[2] *Ibid.*

gold (£4) in his pocket, which the Corporation paid him.[1] Alderman Steward, and others of the city fathers, escorted York Herald to St Stephen's Gate, at the herald's request,[2] and there left him to ride to London, while the rebels continued to go shouting about the streets.

The herald being gone and the people in no mind to withdraw from their enterprise, Kett, seeing his purpose accomplished—the free passage of provisions through the city secured—went back to Mousehold. To prevent any further opposition from the city fathers Kett also required that Mayor Cod, Aldermen William Rogers, John Humberton, Thomas Aldrich, Robert Watson, the preacher, William Brampton and "other worshipful citizens," should be brought to the camp—"whom they carried prisoners, and put them in hold Surrey place, where they remained in chains, and some died." [3]

We are not told the names of those who died,

[1] City Chamberlain's Accounts.

[2] "Seeing their rudeness and partly fearing their desperateness [the herald] desired the said Mr Steward to bring him out of the city—the city with the rebels being in great roar, which still went howling abroad the city."—N. SOTHERTON.

[3] *Ibid.*

nor of those who were in chains.[1] Thomas Aldrich was clearly at large all the time and the mayor, as we shall see, was soon released.

Deep was the humiliation of Mayor Cod, and horrible his fall at the close of day on 22nd July. In the morning he had bidden defiance to Kett, in the evening he was a prisoner, in bonds, at Mousehold, no longer an authority in the city or a person of importance in the rebel camp. Jeers and derision greeted him, and even his life was threatened. Men went about ridiculing the mayor's name, and crying, in imitation of the herald's pompous style :

" Oyes ! Oyes ! As many as will come to the camp tomorrow shall buy a cod's head for a penny."

All this ribaldry was shocking to the townsfolk—that these ill-mannered, disreputable peasants should make a mock at the Chief Magistrate of Norwich seemed a shameful thing. It was reported, too, that the mayor's life was in danger. So out came a deputation of citizens to Alderman Aldrich to urge him to move on behalf of their mayor.

[1] Sotherton speaks of the imprisonment lasting till " the last day " of the commotion, and then goes on to explain Cod's release. It is probable that the names would have been known had any of the citizens died at Mousehold.

The old alderman was popular with the rebels, and Kett always treated him with great respect. No man in Norwich had the influence of Aldrich at the camp—"neither his advice nor enterprises were at any time in vain." [1] On more than one occasion Aldrich had succeeded in restoring to their owners goods taken by the rebels, and in restraining Kett's followers from some of their proposals.[2]

Without hesitation went Alderman Aldrich, and there and then told Kett that Cod must be released, asking him how he dared "to imprison a man who was not only harmless, but a Mayor?" [3] Kett did not answer at once, but sat fixed in thought. And then, as the old alderman raised his voice and told him the mayor must be released, Kett consented, and

[1] Wood.

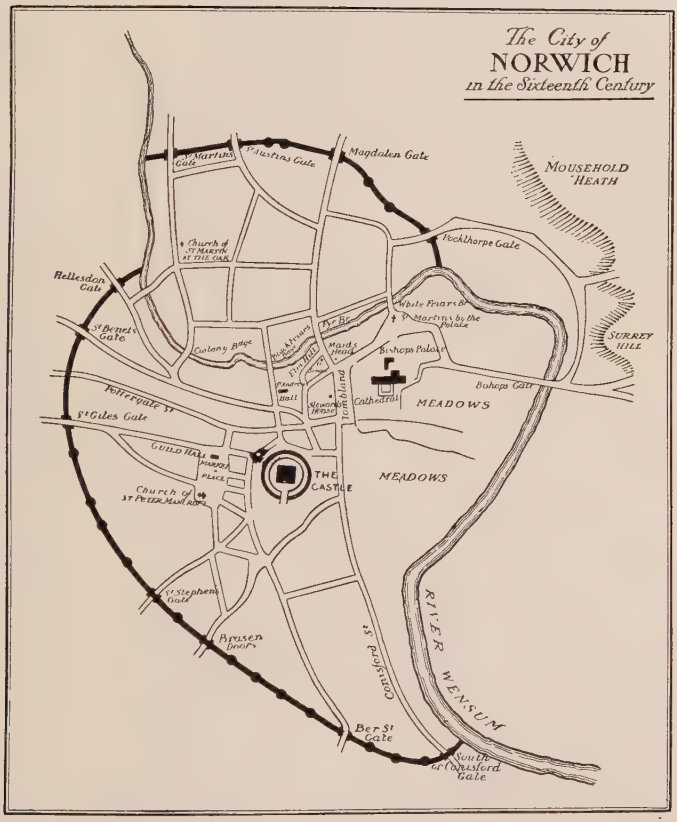
[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Nevylle puts the usual speech into Aldrich's mouth: "Art thou not ashamed, wretched traitor, to hold in prison and irons, I say, not alone a harmless man, but a Mayor, which is the King's Majesty's most faithful lieutenant? Art thou so fierce and cruel, that when, through riot and excess, thou hast wasted the goods and commodities of all men, thou canst now not be satisfied, nor filled, except thou mayest drink up at last also the blood of innocent persons? Therefore, thou wretchedest man the earth beareth, command him to be brought out of prison."

Cod was at once let out from confinement, with "liberty to go and come into the city" as before.

But the spirit of the mayor was broken, his glory was departed. He "was fain for the most part to be at the camp," feeling that near Kett he was safe at least from personal injury. He had failed to keep the rebels from the city, and could no longer exert the authority that had once been his. So Thomas Cod resigned the mayoralty, and appointed Alderman Austen Steward, who lived in Tombland (in the big house exactly opposite Erpingham Gate, on the north and west sides of the churchyard), to be his deputy, with Alderman Henry Bacon and John, Atkinson the sheriffs.[1] These three between them "kept the citizens, except the most vagrant and vagabond persons, in good quiet." Henceforth Thomas Cod is but the shadow of his former self. He who had once walked proudly amongst his fellow-citizens, conscious of their approval, is now a byword. True, the person and goods of Thomas Cod were safe, for he lived unmolested at Mousehold, but the pride of the

[1] Steward, a mercer by trade, "had always been a good and modest man, beloved of poor and rich." He was thrice Mayor of Norwich, 1534, 1546, and 1556, and M.P. in 1541. Bacon, a grocer, was Mayor in 1556 and 1566. Steward's large corner house still stands in Tombland,


The City of
NORWICH
in the Sixteenth Century
St Martins Gate
St Austins Gate
Magdalen Gate
MOUSEHOLD HEATH
Church of St Martin at the Gate
Pockthorpe Gate
Ketteringham Gate
White Friars Br
St Martin's by the Palace
SURREY HILL
St Benet's Gate
Colony Bdge
Black Friars
Augustine Friars
Mantle House
Bishops Palace
Bishops Gate
Pottergate St
Wall
Stewards House
Cathedral
MEADOWS
St Giles Gate
GUILD HALL
MARKET PLACE
THE CASTLE
MEADOWS
Church of St PETER MANCROFT
St Stephens Gate
Brazen Gate
Castleford St
RIVER WENSUM
Ber St Gate
South or Conisford Gate

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chief magistrate was humbled to the dust—so hard was it to be a mayor amidst these turmoils and commotions.

Meantime there was much for Kett to do. His army of 20,000 had still to be victualled, and above this he was anxious that the movement he was leading should spread. It were well to have broken down the enclosures in that corner of Norfolk, but it was more than a local revolt his mind was set on. To save England from the landowners, if such were possible, was his desire.

Envoys were sent out on all sides to rouse the country, and while these missionaries of social revolution carried the tidings of what had been done at Norwich far and wide Kett remained under the Oak of Reformation at his old work—to administer justice, and to see that law and order were maintained within the ranks of his followers.

No easy matter this latter task, for men long oppressed are not apt, in the first days of freedom, to submit willingly to rule, and the attack on the city had loosed the courage of the rebels.

But Kett's authority was supreme. The people believed in their leader, trusted him implicitly, and obeyed orders.

The campaign against the landowners went on apace. The rebels

"cried out against the gentlemen, not only for that they would not pull down their enclosed grounds, but also because they understood by letters found among their servants how they sought by all ways to oppress them: and whatsoever might be said they would have down with the gentlemen. So that within two or three weeks they had so pursued the gentlemen from all parts that in no place durst one keep to his house, but were fain to spoil themselves of their apparel, and lie and keep in woods and sheltered places where no resort was: and some fled out of the country: and glad were others in their houses to save the rest of their goods and cattle by providing daily bread, meat, drink, and all other viands, and by carrying the same at their own charge to the rebels' camp—for the saving of their wives, children, and servants." [1]

In that day it must have seemed to the country people that the power of the landlords was broken. These landlords, who by their enclosures had taken away the very means of life from the peasants, who had ridden roughshod over all right and law, were now themselves brought low, and were in hiding, or in flight, or in service to the camp, while "notwithstanding were divers gentlemen taken and brought to prison; some in Norwich Prison, some in Norwich Castle, and some in Surrey place." [2]

[1] NEVYLLE.
[2] *Ibid.*

Sorry as the condition was of the landlords, it is to be remembered that in every case their lives were spared.[1] Kett was not a man of blood, and it was not his will to raise civil war, or leave a rankling legacy of hatred by putting his neighbours to death. Always before him was the goal of his undertaking—to end the oppression of the people by breaking the power of the landowners. For that purpose Kett laboured, and he neither faltered nor turned from the path he had chosen. Believing himself called to deliver his poorer neighbours from their evil plight, hoping that this rising in Norfolk might be but the beginning of a national movement, Kett acted with resolution from the day he accepted the responsibility of leadership at Wymondham ; but he would have no taking of human life, if, haply, Norfolk could attain freedom by other methods. In the days of battle and hard fighting that were to come Kett was to prove himself a skilful soldier, ready to kill or be killed if needs must ; in his dealings with the county landlords he was the judge, stern and unmoved by any respect of persons, and without shadow of cruelty, meanness, or thirst for blood.

[1] There is no mention by name of a single landowner's execution.

Day after day the landowners who had been arrested for making enclosures were brought before Kett at the Oak to answer for their offences against the commonwealth. Sometimes nothing was proved against the prisoner, and then the people would cry, "He is a good man ; a good man," and the defendant would be promptly set free. Against others, "if any small crime or offence was known," the cry went up, "Let him be hanged ; let him be hanged" ; and when the prisoner would ask why he should be hanged, the people would answer that "Others had used such words against them, and, therefore, they would use these same words again."[1] Often had the vagrant, homeless peasant been condemned to the gallows for no offence save his homelessness, and now would the peasants, whose sons and brothers were so ruthlessly dealt with for the crime of poverty, set the hangman to work on their executioners.

The long-pent-up hatred against "the gentlemen," who had depopulated the countryside, demolishing whole villages, breaking up the common fields, and casting adrift to starve, beg, steal, and die in slavery or on the gallows, hard-working folk, because pasturage was more

[1] NEVYLLE.

profitable to the landlord than tillage, flamed out calling for revenge.

Against many of Kett's prisoners no other reason was offered for capital punishment, but that "they were gentlemen, and therefore not worthy to live."

"So hated at this time was the name of worship or gentleman, that the basest of the people, burning with more than hostile hatred, desired to extinguish, and utterly cut off, not only the gentry themselves, but, if it were possible, all the offspring and hope of them." [1]

Had Robert Kett been a weaker man he would have yielded to the clamour of blood. Had he been less humane, or a tyrant, implacable and inflexible, he would have ordered the destroyers of rural England to summary execution. The landlords were in his hand, Kett had but to say the word, and the death they had brought to so many would be theirs.

The word was not said, and the landlords were not hanged. It was no "bloody assize" at the Oak of Reformation. Robert Kett could show the judges and lawmakers of England that the people in power were more merciful than their rulers, that democracy and social equality were not to be set up by the hangman, or established on carnage and slaughter.

[1] NEVYLLE.

These landlords, he may have discerned, were not so guilty as appeared. They but followed the instinct to grow rich and powerful, their fault was in their want of feeling. It was the system that allowed a few to possess the land and oppress their fellows that was wrong and must be overthrown. In time these very landlords, now trembling before him for their lives, might learn that, dispossessed of their unrighteous power, a fuller and better life would be theirs in social service and mutual aid with their neighbours. It might be, too, that tasting mercy, the prejudice of their class would yield, and they would believe that the camp at Mousehold had been set up for just and noble ends, worthy of the support of all good men and true. They were Englishmen, these landowners, as he, Kett, was. Why should they not join hands together? By sparing his prisoners Kett could reasonably hope to influence other landowners favourably to the rising. Feelings of humanity (rare indeed in the sixteenth century, when the stake and the gallows were in constant use by high authority) and good generalship both declared against putting the landlords to death.

And yet of all these men whom Kett spared, not one was found to plead for mercy for the rebel

leader when he lay captive in the hands of his enemies. No voice was raised by the landowners for pardon or pity to the peasants when a few weeks later the cause of the landless was lost. No thought even of common gratitude for the mercy they had received found expression on the lips of the Norfolk squires when their hour of peril was passed.

The insults and injuries they had received rankled too deeply in the hearts of the landowners to make such a thing possible. They had been robbed, spoiled of their goods, imprisoned as common criminals—were they to feel gratitude because their lives were not taken? As well expect gratitude from a man whose pocket has been picked because the thief has not knocked him down as well. So the landowners of Norfolk would argue, reasonably enough, when the rising was over.

In two instances the names are recorded of persons who suffered rough handling on their arrest, but were saved from greater violence.

One Wharton, "a man of great courage, but not favoured by the people," was haled off to Norwich Castle. He was "guarded with a lane of men from the tree into the city," but in spite

of this the rebels " pricked him with their spears and other weapons on purpose to kill him, had they (who were guarding him) not had great help to withstand their cruelty." [1]

The other was a lawyer named Melton, " a subtle fellow, and a man set to be bought for money " [2]—a cunning rascal, unscrupulous and corrupt; of whom it was further said that " he was revengeful, and one that used to raise up spirits with fearful signs and superstitious wonders." On the way to prison " mighty showers fell, mixed with hail, which covered the earth and was very deep " ; but " this fearful tempest did not in the least appal or terrify them," and Melton was driven along " with all reproach and contumely." [3]

In the City Chamberlain's Accounts there is an incident told that shows the rebels were easily persuaded from killing those who had resisted their entrance to the city.

" Item the next day being the 23rd July a great sort of the same company with others to the number of 100 persons at the least, came again to the accountant's house and took

[1] N. SOTHERTON.
[2] WOOD. " *Venalique vir ingenio.*"—NEVYLLE.
[3] N. SOTHERTON.

away of his own goods 2 bows, 3 shief of arrows, with cases and girdles, 4 German halberds, 2 black bills, certain clubs and staves, 2 German rivetts as fair as any were in Norwich, and a jack of fustian, and also carried him away with them to Mousehold to have him to the tree for making of the aforesaid gunshot, and by the way he entreated them so that they carried him to Norwich booth, where he gave them for remission from going to the tree 3s. 4d."

Trade was at an end in Norwich in those last days of July 1549, and there was considerable disquiet in the city. But Steward, the deputy mayor, and the sheriffs had Kett's authority to maintain order, and only the "vagabond and vagrant persons" (they would be called "hooligans" to-day) gave any trouble. By this time, as Steward admitted, a large number of citizens sided with the rebels.

On 29th July word was brought to Kett that Lord Northampton was marching from London with a body of troops to put down the rising. And, sure enough, two days later Northampton was seen at the city gates.

So this was the answer of Somerset's Government to the "Requests and Demands" of Robert

Kett and his company! And now it had come to pass that the men of Mousehold Camp must fight hard, even to the death, if they were not to be overcome in their enterprise.

VI

THE DEFEAT OF LORD NORTHAMPTON

"The Marquis being thus beaten out of Norwich, with the residue that escaped, hasted to London, leaving the city in the rebels' power; many of the chief citizens fled, leaving their wives, children, and all their possessions in their enemies' hands."—BLOMEFIELD, *History of Norfolk.*

CHAPTER VI: *The Defeat of Lord Northampton*

On the return of York Herald to London the Royal Council at once sent a force to Norwich to "repress these rebels." William Parr, Marquis of Northampton, was in command of the expedition, and he, with Lord Sheffield, Lord Wentworth, and a number of knights,[1] and country squires with their retainers, and about 1500 soldiers, including a body of Italian mercenaries, arrived within a mile of the city on the afternoon of 31st July, and there called a halt.

A herald, Norroy, King-at-Arms, was sent on to summon the city to yield, and to announce that if it did not yield war would be declared. Alderman Steward at once answered that Thomas Cod, the mayor, was a prisoner in Kett's camp,

[1] "A number of knights as Sir Anthony Denny, Sir Ralph Sadler, Sir Richard a Lee, Sir Richard Southwell, Sir John Gates, Sir Thomas Paston, Sir Henry Bedingfield, Sir John Suliard, Sir William Walgrave, Sir John Cutts, Sir Thomas Cornwallis, and divers other knights, squires and gentlemen and divers Italian strangers, and others to the number of 1200 or 1400 persons."—N. Sotherton.

King Edward's *Journal* puts the number at 1060 horsemen.

but that word should be sent to him to know whether he would have the Lord Northampton admitted. And Cod, on receiving his deputy's message, made a characteristic reply — for his confinement at Mousehold did not hinder a free expression of opinion—and advised urgently the surrender of the city to Northampton. Cod apologised for the state of things in Norwich and regretted that he was kept by force from welcoming the Marquis. He would have come at once had Kett permitted it.

The mayor's message in full was as follows [1] :—

" That never anything happened more grievous unto him all his lifetime than these evils, which having been brought in of most seditious persons, have almost overturned with villainy that cannot be atoned for, his county and city of Norwich, which before were flourishing. That (as much as by man's reason could be foreseen) he had used all diligence that these tumults might have been restrained at the beginning : yet he could not bring it to that pass, by reason of the rage of the mischief, wherewith the minds of all were holden entangled. That he had endured the terror of imprisonment, the peril of death,

[1] According to Wood.

finally all extremity at their hands, and at this time was holden in the camp, with a guard of soldiers round about him. Otherwise he would have come himself without delay (as was meet) to the Marquess of Northampton. Nevertheless, that the City might be kept the better in order, he had given his authority of government to Augustine Steward, a very careful and wise man : lest, in his absence, the people through ignorance might fall away from their duty. That the city should be at his commandment, and himself (if Kett would permit) would willingly come out of the camp, and receive him, and commit his own and the state of the city to his protection."

Steward was entirely of Cod's opinion concerning the propriety of welcoming Northampton and his soldiers to the city, and so he proceeded forth with, "a great multitude of citizens following," to Northampton's presence, taking with him the Sword of State—"a sign of the King's Majesty's presence and of his authority, which in the chief cities of England is wont always to be carried before the mayor."

Steward explained to Northampton the regrettable but unavoidable absence of Mayor Cod, and promised on behalf of the citizens, who

were still loyal, a "ready and willing" obedience to the King's commands.

The deputy mayor declared "that he and the chief of the city were come to deliver up the city, themselves, and all that they had, to the authority of the King: they confessed there were many of the citizens who could not be deterred; but would needs consent to the rebels: that the greatest part of the best citizens, however, still remained in their faith and allegiance, and had not joined themselves with the others, nor in any respect conspired against the King's Majesty: and that those now present were ready and willing to do whatever should be enjoined them, and to receive him and his army into the City."

To this Northampton in return promised to protect the loyal citizens, and added that he hoped to put down the rebellion very speedily.

Then the mayor's Sword of State was delivered to Sir Richard Southwell, who, bareheaded, carried it before the Marquis of Northampton. A procession was formed, St Stephen's Gate was thrown open, and the city entered with due solemnity. The Marquis was at once taken to the Council Chamber and refreshed with "bread, drink, meat, wine, fruit, and other things"—

the bill amounting to 3s. 8d., with an extra 14d. for a pound of sugar.[1]

The next move was to the market-place,[2] and here a great crowd assembled and a long consultation took place between Northampton and the principal citizens. It was decided that the city should be carefully defended against any attack from the camp at Mousehold, and men were appointed to keep strict watch and ward. Northampton, who was nothing of a soldier, went off with his knights to sup and sleep in Steward's big house at Tombland, arranging to spend the night lying "upon cushions and pillows."

The fighting began that same evening; for a party of the Italian mercenaries who had strayed beyond the gates fell in with a number of Kett's men on Magdalen Hill and were driven back with loss. An Italian nobleman was amongst the prisoners taken and he was hanged without mercy on Mount Surrey,[3] "although

[1] City Chamberlain's Accounts. The entertainment must have been of modest dimensions, but the sugar was an extravagance.

[2] "The Market Cross was erected in 1503, and sold by the Tonnage Committee in 1732, and shortly afterwards pulled down."—BAYNE, "History of Norwich."

[3] By "a wretched rebel, one Cayme of Bungay," according to Sotherton.

many would have given as much as £100 to ransom him."

It was a bad beginning for the King's troops. Northampton at once called another council. The watchmen at the gates were commanded to keep their guard "more painfully and diligently than they were wont." Sir Edward Ward was made Knight-Marshal, and "gave the watch-word." Sir Thomas Paston, Sir John Clare, Sir William Walgrave, Sir Thomas Cornwallis, and Sir Henry Bedingfield, all men of "approved valour and wisdom," were placed in command of different parts of the city, and went about their work, encouraging and animating the men, "sometimes with their words, sometimes with their countenance, sometimes with their own travail and labour." The main body of soldiers encamped in the market-place, "where, gathering great heaps of wood together they set them on fire, lest if anything should happen on the sudden, they being hindered by the darkness of the night and ignorance of the place, might be encompassed unawares by the enemy." These things being done, Northampton retired to rest.

A few hours later and all were in the midst of battle. Kett had decided quickly that Northampton and his soldiers must be driven out of

Norwich. It was intolerable to him that hired ruffians from Italy should be brought into Norfolk to establish law and order over the bodies of an English peasantry contending for freedom. As for this William Parr, Marquis of Northampton, he was neither soldier nor statesman. What respect was due to this courtly parasite, this creature of royalty, who had risen to high place by reason of his sister's marriage with Henry VIII., and his own servility to that monarch? And Northampton's knights were landowners, enemies of the people, the very persons against whose authority and tyranny Kett's men had risen.

So in the dead of night, when the Marquis and his knights were "in their sweet sleep" in Steward's house, a great attack was made on the city, and for three hours and more the fight was fierce on both sides.

The rebels began by a discharge of ordnance and a loud cry, and at this the watchmen on the walls and at the gates called, "To arms! To arms!" As before the cannon did no great hurt to anybody, either because they were overcharged in the loading, or because the gunners were unskilful.[1]

[1] "It was thought by some the gunners were persuaded to fire too high, having been bribed to do so."—F. W. Russell.

At the first alarm, Sir Edward Ward, the Knight-Marshal, roused Lord Northampton, "his lords, knights, and others," and they all came, in half armour, to the market-place, where they remained till daybreak. Alderman Steward was sent to find old Lord Wentworth, Sir Anthony Denny, Sir Ralph Sadler, and Sir Richard a Lee, and bring them to take counsel. Sir Richard a Lee, "sitting in a stall of the market, advised the rampering up of divers places, especially on the west side of the city, for the better keeping the city with fewer men." It was obvious to him that with their comparatively small force every man would be wanted for active service.

Suddenly and simultaneously the rebels poured down from Mousehold upon the city, "as a rushing stream." They hacked and fired at the gates, they climbed the walls, they swam the river, they pushed in wherever a gap in the old walls was visible. But Northampton's troops held their ground manfully, and Sir Thomas Paston and Sir William Walgrave fought conspicuously to keep the rebels out of Norwich. Kett's men were badly armed, but they vastly outnumbered the royal army, and they were fighting desperately, for their lives

were at stake. Defeat meant death at the hangman's hands.

Again and again the rebels came on with a rush, crowding the river, and swarming to the city walls. No quarter was given on either side, and, even when mortally wounded, Kett's men still fought on and struck at their adversaries. "Half dead, drowned in their own and other men's blood, even to the last gasp, they furiously withstood our men. Yea, many also stricken through the breasts with swords, and the sinews of their legs cut asunder (I tremble to rehearse it), yet creeping on their knees, were moved with such fury, as they wounded our soldiers, lying amongst the slain almost without life." [1]

Three hundred of the rebels lost their lives that night, and the city remained untaken. "For when the force of the enemy abated, the soldiers rushed upon them with such violence that they could no longer abide the fight, or stand to resist; but being overthrown, and beaten down on every side, they were driven out of the city and returned to their camp." [2]

The enemy being repulsed, labourers were set to work to repair the gates, and the Marquis and

[1] Wood.
[2] *Ibid.*

his staff went to "breakfast at the Maydes-head,"[1] Although for the moment the attack had been beaten off, Northampton was aware that with so small an army at his disposal the position was extremely precarious. Not only was Kett's host close at hand and Norwich ill-prepared for a siege, within the city itself were so many supporters of the rebellion that should these rise it would be practically impossible to escape disaster. To add to the difficulties only the wealthy and more important of the townsmen could be relied upon—the burgesses generally waited anxiously for the issue of the battle before taking sides against Kett. These people considered they had already suffered enough loss through the rising, and, while desiring earnestly the return of civic peace and quiet and trade, were not prepared to endanger their lives by any hazardous partisanship. If the Government could put down the rising—well and good; if not, it were better to leave Kett in authority than have the city wasted by the fire and sword of civil war. At present it was not clear whether Northampton or Kett was the stronger, and it

[1] The Maid's Head Hotel, opposite St Simon's Church, though largely rebuilt, still remains one of the oldest inns in the country.

occurred to the burgesses that perhaps a promise of pardon might yet induce the bulk of the rebels to disperse. Northampton welcomed the proposal, and so in the morning the herald (Norroy's herald) and a trumpeter were sent down to Pockthorp Gate, where it was said some 400 or 500 men were to be found.

No man was more delighted than the deputy mayor at the prospect of peace. He accompanied the herald and the trumpeter with joy [1] to Pockthorpe Gate on the morning of 1st August, only to find to his disappointment no one waiting, "neither man, woman, nor child." However, a blast from the trumpet quickly brought a crowd from the hill, led by one John Flotman, of Beccles, "an outrageous and busy fellow, a man of voluble tongue ready by nature with reproaches and arrogant speeches." [2] On Flotman asking what the trumpet call meant, the herald answered:

"Go thy way, and declare unto thy company from the Marquis of Northampton, governor of the King's forces, that the King's Majesty doth command and admonish them, that now, at length, they repent and put an end to the out-

[1] SOTHERTON.
[2] HOLINSHED.

rages they were committing : if they will do this, they shall be safe, and shall by his clemency be free from peril, and no man shall be charged with the crimes he may have been guilty of."

Thereupon, as Kett was not present, Flotman took up the herald's offer and made a stout reply, much on the lines of Kett's former replies to such offers.

Flotman, after freely expressing his opinion concerning Northampton, renewed the old contention that they had taken up arms in defence of the commonwealth and were not criminals. At the same time to surrender their arms on the vague promise of pardon would be to invite the defeat of their undertaking.

Said Flotman :

" I care not a pin's point for my lord Marquis of Northampton, who is a man neither of courage, counsel, nor good fortune. I despise him and hate him as an infamous and worthless man—one always standing in need of others' help —a man guilty of all disloyalty and treason.

" As for us, we, for our part, have always been earnest defenders of the King's safety and dignity, and we will ever be ready to spend for his sake all our goods and fortunes.

" We have taken up arms not against the King, but for things which we hope will turn out hereafter as much for his welfare as our own. Our consciences do not convict us either of wickedness conceived in our hearts or of treason against the King.

" For what is it we desire to do ? Is it not to defend the

King's name and dignity; to provide for the common safety; to defend the rights of law and liberty; to preserve ourselves, our wives, children, and goods; and finally, to deliver the commonwealth, vexed as it is in so many ways unjustly, from the detestable pride, lust, and cruelty of its enemies? Wherefore, being void of offence, we ought naturally to be free from punishment.

"A gorgeous herald, emblazoned with gold, has just made us certain offers, and in appearance these are excellent and magnificent. But this has only been done in order that, either by making peace now—a false and treacherous peace at the best—he may restrain your endeavours to recover your liberty, or else, having deprived us of the means wherewith we are now furnished, and so shut us out from all defence, he may deliver us up to a cruel death.

"Let those, therefore, who have offended enjoy the impunity promised; we will not hinder them from so doing. While we are defended by our weapons and by our own innocence we feel ourselves perfectly secure, and will never crave mercy of any man. The commonwealth is now almost utterly overthrown, and it is daily declining through the indolence of the 'gentlemen.' Our intention is to restore it to its former dignity out of the miserable ruin in which it hath so long been lying; and either we shall accomplish this by our present course of action, or else, as becomes brave and high-spirited men, we will fight boldly, risk our lives, and, if it be so, perish on the battlefield. Liberty may suffer much at the hands of oppressors, but never shall her sacred cause be betrayed by us." [1]

Flotman had hardly finished before a "fear-

[1] Wood.

Sotherton is content to say that Flotman "defied the Lord Lieutenant and said he was a traitor, nor would of his pardon, nor had deserved pardon, but that they were the King's true subjects."

ful outcry arose in the city, and the shout was heard, 'To arms! To arms!'" For while the herald and the deputy mayor and Flotman were making speeches at Pockthorpe Gate, the rebels, "excited by desperate rage and impudent boldness," had again attacked the city, and this time they forced an entry by the hospital meadows. The herald's business thus came to an abrupt end, and he quickly departed over Whitefriars Bridge.

Deputy Mayor Steward "rode another way into Tombland to see what would come of it, and in the plain before the palace gate of the bishop the Lord Lieutenant's soldiers fought with the rebels."

The fight was hottest between Bishopsgate and the Cathedral, and by noon the King's troops were worsted. Lord Sheffield fell in the battle[1] slain by a stalwart rebel, named Fulke, a butcher and carpenter by trade, who was after-

[1] It was said Lord Sheffield, "being more mindful of his birth and rank than of his safety, and desirous of performing the work he had in hand, fell upon the thickest of the enemy, and fighting too boldly and carelessly, by chance was thrown headlong from his horse into a ditch: lying here at their mercy, he besought them to spare his life, promising them a great reward, and declaring his name. It was all however of no avail."—F. W. Russell.

wards hanged at the suppression of the rising. Bedingfield and Cornwallis were taken prisoners by Kett.

Sheffield's death was the turning point in the fight. It heartened the rebels, and as the army from Mousehold kept pouring into the city in apparently an endless stream the soldiers became demoralised, and at last took to flight in hopeless confusion. On hearing of Sheffield's death Northampton's troops began to languish: "insomuch that when the rebels, puffed up with exceeding joy, making a mighty alarm on every side, as having already gotten the victory, rushed into the city (by what way they could get in), following upon our men, and as mortal enemies setting upon them, they being partly overcharged with the multitude (for they were almost 20,000 and ours were only 1500), and partly stricken with the death of this noble young gentleman, went out of the city, and (escaping by divers journeys through byways, hiding themselves all the night in caves, groves, and woods) returned at the length all of them to London." [1]

By noon the battle was over and Northampton was in full flight. The total loss of life was

[1] Wood.

not great. Sotherton put it "above 40 persons," and added that "many of the Lord Lieutenant's men departed sore hurt." King Edward's Journal has it that the Marquis departed with the loss of 100 men. Nevylle declares that the number was "140 of the enemy slain, and some of our soldiers."

The city suffered badly in this conflict—it could hardly be otherwise. Houses were fired in Holme Street [1] and the city gates were burnt in the hour of victory. Many of the wealthier citizens fled hastily from Norwich, leaving their families and their goods to the mercy of the rebels, while others hid their "gold, silver plate, and household stuff whatsoever they possessed, in wells, ponds, and other secret places, that it might not be helping to the rebels thereafter." [2]

Deputy Mayor Steward remained in the city, shutting himself up alone in his big house, and brooding in despair on what was taking place, until a party of Kett's men came knocking at the door to know if Lord Northampton was in hiding in the house. In great trouble was Alderman Steward on that 1st August. He had welcomed

[1] Now Bishopbridge Street.
[2] SOTHERTON.

my Lord Northampton and disavowed the rebels, and now the rebels were in command of the city, and the deputy mayor was of no more account than its mayor. Steward entered his house while Northampton and his troops fled in disorder; and there, "doubtful what to do, and finding his servants departed with the army, seeing the city empty of all assistance, and every man's door shut, comfortless, with a heavy heart went up alone to his highest gallery." [1] Looking out over the city Steward saw that the rebels "had set all the houses in the street called Holmstreet afire on both sides, with a great part of the Hospital, houses of office that belonged to the poor in that house, and also the city gates called Bishops gates with the lead thereof molten; and the gates and houses of them of Pockthorpe, Magdalene, St Austins', Conisford, and Bearstreet [were] all on fire that day." [2]

Presently at St Augustine's gate were "a great number of rebels, with a drum before them, who came to his house, and rapped, and cried, 'Set fire in the gates.' And he being greatly afraid (for all his servants were fled from him), himself alone unshut the gates; whom presently

[1] SOTHERTON.
[2] *Ibid.*

they took, and plucked off his gown (which he used at that time), calling him a rebel, and threatening him a most shameful death "[1] unless he would tell them in what place was the Marquis of Northampton. Steward answered that " they were departed," and on this they rushed with much violence into his house, searching " every hole and place, and found none to qualify their fierceness."

Finally Steward " was fain to give the whole money in his purse to depart." Even then he was not left in peace, though, thanks to a certain rebel named Doo, the deputy mayor was let off easily considering the circumstances. Steward was a wealthy mercer, and his shop was next invaded. For " there came another company that brake open his shop and in burdens carried away whatever was therein, till one Doo of their company, a servant of Mr Smith of Huntingfield, had sharply told them for robbing and spoiling they should all be hanged, whereupon many of their fardles were cast again into the shop : whom to rid was fain to be cut both shirt cloths and doublets cloths of fustian, and given them to save the rest : and after their departure came another company to have spoiled, had not

[1] SOTHERTON.

the said Doo and three or four more kept them off, saying he was spoiled before." [1]

Other houses were also roughly invaded in the quest for Northampton.

Nevylle, in piteous language, describes the dreadful day of Kett's triumph over the King's troops :

" Lamentable and miserable was the state of the city : when nothing was seen or heard, but lamentation and weeping of those that were vexed and troubled : and on the other side the rejoicing of the enemy ; the weeping of women, the crying of men, and the noise of those that ran about the streets ; then the clashing of weapons, the flames of the burning, the ruin and fall of houses, and many other fearful things which (that I may not tell in full) I willingly let pass, which so filled with horror, not only the minds and eyes of the beholders, but struck with incredible sorrow the hearts and ears of all that heard it."

Fortunately for the citizens, the fire, which spread with fearful rapidity, for most of the

[1] SOTHERTON.

dwelling-houses were thatched, was checked and extinguished by a heavy fall of rain.[1]

Bitter indeed was the dismay of the prosperous burgesses at Kett's triumph. They could not bring themselves to work with the rebel leader, and were without will to make resistance. Those who were able made off from Norwich, the rest stayed at home and moaned feebly of their plight. It is small wonder that some of the shops of the rich tradesmen were looted in the days that followed the victory. Civic authority had crumbled to dust, Kett had a thousand responsibilities on hand, and it was a day or two before the rebels woke up to the necessity of re-establishing order and preserving the city from attack.[2]

It was impossible to reappoint Steward as deputy mayor, but Kett chose certain of his own men for aldermen and constables, and arranged

[1] "After the departure of the Marquis, fire being thrown upon the tops of the houses, most of which were thatched, it spread from house to house, and from one street to another, till in a short time it had consumed very many houses and other buildings ; providentially, much rain fell just at this time, by which the fire was speedily checked and hindered from spreading so much as otherwise it might have done."—F. W. Russell.

[2] "Wherefore desisting from violence they began to think of their own safety."—Wood.

Augustine Steward, Mayor of Norwich
From the Portrait in the Guildhall

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for watch and ward to be kept every day at the gates, at the prisons, and other important places; and some of the citizens who remained were told off for this duty.[1] Steward was obliged to help in enrolling citizens to act as watchmen, and to the last he endeavoured to keep up the religious services at the Oak. For he "procured Dr Barrett, a preacher, and other preachers to go up among the rebels and preach God's word. Which, notwithstanding, helped not at all, for so impudent were they and out of order that no one could restrain them."[2] The time had long gone by for preachers of patience and moderate counsel to be listened to as they deserved.

For three weeks Robert Kett "had the rule" of Norwich, and beyond loss of trade and the inevitable and open robbery of the rich men in the city—who for the most part had run away—there was both respect for life and a fairly good order all that time. The anxiety, of course, was

[1] "And now began the Rebels again to possess the city and to have Aldermen and Constables at their command; and had the rule to do what they listed, and kept the gates themselves of the city with the prisons and other places, so that they ruled the whole, and would command men by houses to watch their camp and gates in the night, which both many men and their servants then at home were fain to do until after God gave the victory."—N. SOTHERTON.

[2] *Ibid.*

great, and the state of the city was pitiful in the extreme to the good burgesses. So hard and hopeless seemed their lot that some of the burgesses were even moved to repentance and a "holy life." [1]

It was not sufficient to compel the citizens to take their turn as sentries; they and their servants were obliged to minister to the wants of Mousehold Camp.

"The women resorted twice a day to prayer, and the servants (except what must needs stay at home) did the same. When Kett's ambassadors were sent to any private house they were fain to bake or brew or do any work for the camp, else they were carried as traitors to the Oak. As for trading, there was none in the city, people being forced to hide up their choicest goods, and happy were they that had the faithfullest servants.

"They that did open their shops were robbed and spoiled, and their goods were measured by the arm's length and dispersed among the rebels; their children they set away for fear of fire. I, the writer (who was then above twenty-two years of age, and an eye witness) was present after prayer during this dolorous state, when people met and bewailed the miserable state they were in, and like to be in, holding up their hands to heaven, praying with tears that God would

[1] "The state of the city began to be in most miserable case, so that all men looked for utter destruction, both of life and goods. Then the remnant that feared God, seeing the plague thus of sorrow increasing, fell to prayer and holy life, and wished but to see the day that after they might talk thereover, hoping never to recover help again, nor to see their city prosper."—N. SOTHERTON.

deal so mercifully with them, that they might live to talk of it, thinking it impossible at that time, they were so devoid of hope." [1]

Utter hopelessness was the general feeling of the trading classes in the city, and all who had property were dispirited under Kett's rule.

" There was no hope that any citizen looked for to enjoy his own ; such as had trusty servants caused their goods, bonds, stuff and money to be made up in walls and cellars, for that they looked with fire to be consumed : the masters themselves in many places were seen to be concealed in false roofs, and other secret places, lest if they had been taken prisoners, as other gentlemen were, they should be driven to [join] the rebels." [2]

To join the rebels, and assist in helping the landless peasantry to end the enclosures, were the last things in the mind of the respectable citizens. All they wanted was to be allowed to trade and grow rich in peace and quietness.

The servants of the fugitive burgesses acted faithfully by their masters. For Kett declared that all who had fled the city were to be held as traitors and open enemies of the King's Majesty

[1] The Norwich Roll—quoted by F. W. Russell.
[2] N. Sotherton.

and their goods to be confiscated. Yet many of the servants " to save the rest of their master's goods devised to bake bread, and to roast, and to bake pasties and to give it unto them [the rebels] to save the rest." [1] And this plan seems to have been successful—" the hungry people being pacified, were somewhat stayed from their plundering."

In all their misery, and in spite of their heavy losses—" very many ever after while they lived in their household affairs, fared the worse "—the Norwich traders were in no danger of their lives. Kett would have no man killed save in the hour of battle. The mayor and aldermen had thwarted his plans, the wealthy citizens had done their worst to hinder and discourage the rising, but Robert Kett was without thought of vengeance. As he spared the lives of the land-owners, so he spared the citizens ; yet because he must needs take toll of their goods he reaped only hatred for his pains.

[1] N. Sotherton.

VII

THE RISING FAILS IN THE COUNTY

"Robert Kett was not a mere craftsman: he was a man of substance, the owner of several manors: his conduct throughout was marked by considerable generosity: nor can the name of patriot be denied to him who deserted the class to which he might have belonged or aspired, and cast in his lot with the suffering people."—CANON DIXON, *History of the Church of England.*

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CHAPTER VII: *The Rising Fails in the County*

In those three weeks of August Kett waited anxiously at Mousehold for the rising to become general, and disappointments pressed hardly upon him at the want of success of the lieutenants he had despatched.

In July the country people rose round Lynn, Downham, and Swaffham and made a camp near Castle Rising. Driven from there by the energies of the landowners, who were by no means so timid in that part of Norfolk as they were in Kett's own neighbourhood at Wymondham and Norwich, the peasants moved south, and made another camp at Watton. Here they stayed a fortnight, holding the river at Brandon Ferry and Thetford. But they seem to have been quite without leaders, and early in August Watton was abandoned, and the rebels there came on to join Kett's army on Mousehold.[1]

[1] In the roll of the Mayors of Lynn reference is made, under 1549, as follows: "The Commons of Norfolk did rebel, and kept their camp at Mousehold beside Norwich and Rising beside Lynn."

At Cambridge, too, the people had risen simultaneously with the Norfolk men, and on 10th July had pulled down the fences erected at Barnwell by one Bailiff Smyth. However, the mayor, the vice-chancellor, and certain heads of colleges went out after the rebels, and they were with some difficulty at length " pacified." Somerset wrote a long letter to the vice-chancellor and mayor on 13th July, in approval of what had been done, and urging the redress of recent unlawful enclosures :

" We commend us right heartily unto you, and by your joint letters of the tenth of this month we understand as well the disorder of certain light persons there attempting disclosures and remedies of their own griefs : as also your good wise dealing with them toward the appeasing of them, for the which first we give you hearty thanks with commendation. And for the further order of your proceeding, we will give you the mayor as your officer and governor, being your steward, that you shall principally behave yourself with your brethren so as may best tend to the common quiet ; and declaring unto them the pleasure of the King's Majesty now signified by his Majesty's commission for the redress of

unlawful enclosures and such enormities; and if they shall not retain order by the King's authority, but by their own, assure them of the King's Majesty's extreme indignation, and in the end to lack their redress which upon their good behaviours they shall both speedily and effectually receive. For the better opinion whereof if there be any manifest unlawful enclosures of late made, the same may be by yourselves redressed, and you our vice-chancellor as by our direction being your chancellor, we will that ye endeavour your number to show themselves some good examples of obedience, that learning, virtue, and godliness be not slandered, but that by your conformity and temperance the difference may be tried betwixt the ignorant and the learned, the rude and the taught. And herein resteth no small charge of you and others which ought by your profession to be a light of virtue, godliness, and obedience. Assuring you both that the King's Majesty hath in his hands both mercy and justice. And as his Majesty hath been hitherto disposed to distribute the one largely; so will we and must, if he be provoked dilate the other, through the power of God, who keep both your societies in his peace, to the respect whereof we authorise you to bend your

power and force. And if by gentleness the offenders do not cease their evil, let them (if they be able) cease by your execution." [1]

To Cecil also on 16th July, Somerset sent a promise of pardon to the Cambridge rebels: [2]

"We have received your letters of the fifteenth of this instant, and thereby understand your request for a pardon to be granted to certain persons lately offending within the county of Cambridge, whereunto upon hope of their amendment we are conformable. And to that end we send you herewith their pardon, upon the proclaiming whereof we will ye declare the King's Majesty's bountiful mercy and goodness towards them, being moved with pity upon this their first offence; and upon the committing of the like not to trust for his Majesty's mercy to be showed unto them, but for his princely power and sword to be extended against them as a scourge to rebels. And perceiving amendment upon this admonition, his Majesty will accept and use them as any other his faithful subjects not committing the like offences."

The promises of pardon and of the redress of

[1] C. H. Cooper, "Annals of Cambridge."
[2] *Ibid.*

grievances ended the trouble at Cambridge, but there is an item at this time in the town treasurer's accounts, "for carrying out of gallows and a new rope," which suggests that "his Majesty's mercy" was not too widely extended after the pacification.

Near Hingham a rebel camp was also set up towards the end of July, and this was attacked boldly by Sir Edmund Knyvett and his retainers. The issue was uncertain. "Some of his own men were unhorsed, and in danger of being killed; but after displaying much valour, he succeeded in rallying his followers, and escaping with them."

The rebels then "repaired to Kett to show their losses and complain of the same: having consulted with them and others, it was proposed that they should attack Sir Edmund at Buckenham Castle, in order to fetch him out of it by force. Considerable dissension, however, took place among the leaders; for, the place being well fortified, some thought it too strong to be taken, while others were held back by their fears, the castle being full twelve miles from the main camp; and so that enterprise dropped, the most part thinking it best to sleep in a whole skin." [1]

[1] BLOMEFIELD.

At Hingham, as at Castle Rising, Watton, and Cambridge, the weakness amongst the peasants was the want of responsible leaders. Kett alone displayed any real powers of generalship, and he could rely on a number of good fighting men in his camp, and on many faithful lieutenants.

The hardest disappointment to Kett came from Yarmouth.

On the first news of the camp at Mousehold some of the Suffolk people, notably of Beccles and Bungay, had risen and marched swiftly to Yarmouth. They captured John Millicent and Nicholas Fenn, the town bailiffs ; but these two soon regained their liberty, and as the townsfolk refused to admit the rebels or to sympathise with the revolt, the Suffolk men withdrew to Mousehold.

On Sir Thomas Wodehouse reporting to the King's Council that Yarmouth was loyal to the Crown, Somerset wrote on 26th July congratulating the bailiffs, and urging them to be on the alert :

" We have received advertisement by the bearer, Thomas Woodhouse, that ye have very honestly kept the town against the rebels ; your diligence therein we take in good part towards

you, and require a continuance in you for the same, and now that Woodhouse cometh down thither, who is vice-admiral, the same is instructed for the order of the ships and mariners, which you shall follow. And considering that the port of Yarmouth is towards the country of Scotland, and so most likely to attempt matter against, it shall be best that you have a special regard unto it and namely to keep your mariners together for the service of the King's Majesty as occasion may require."

A week after the despatch of this letter of Somerset's, Northampton having in the meantime been defeated, Kett made a strong attempt to win over Yarmouth. He sent a commissioner with one hundred men, and authority to take command at the port.

As on previous occasions the official letter was signed by old Alderman Aldrich, who was still on good terms with Kett, and whose name, it might have been thought, would carry weight with the constitutionally-minded.

Cod no longer signs, and is in fact heard of no more while the rising lasts.

" Nicholas Byron our commissioner in this behalf. Be it known to all men, that we Robert Kett and Thomas Aldrich,

commissioners of the King's Camp at Mousehold, have appointed out of our camp aforesaid, one hundred of men to return from us to Yarmouth, for the maintenance of the King's town there against our enemies.

" Also we do certify you, that we, for the more sufficient and necessary victualling of our said 100 men, do appoint Richard Smith, Thomas Clarke, and John Rotherham, and also to take up horses for the further aiding of our said men.

" Dated at the King's Great Camp at Mousehold the 5th day of August in the 3rd year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord King Edward the Sixth.

" By me ROBERT KETT.
" By me THOMAS ALDRICH."

But neither to commission or commissioner did Yarmouth show the smallest respect. The townsfolk declined altogether to admit any of Kett's men or to grant supplies to Mousehold, and instead sent off three burgesses, George Millicent, Gilbert Grice, and John Echard, post-haste to London, who were received in royal audience. Somerset in reply, 6th August, wrote that he would " very shortly and by main force weed and try out our good subjects from the evil, to minister aid and comfort to the one, and contrariwise to extend the rigour and extremity of our sword to the other." He exhorted them to continue the guard of the town, until his coming, for at that time the Protector himself was proposing to take command of the next expedition into Norfolk.

Kett continued to send proclamations to Yarmouth, ordering various matters as though the town acknowledged his authority. Two of these documents have been preserved,[1] and run as follows :—

" Nicholas Fen and Thomas Gardiner we commend us unto you in God's behalf, and for the discharge of your own conscience to go through with this bringer, for all such legacies, as be due to him by the death of his uncle, and if you shall refuse to do this, there will be found means to bring you hither before us by complaint to your great shame. From Mousehold this 8th of August.

" By us Robert Kett.
and Thomas Aldrich."

" We do require you, and in the King's name do straightly charge you John, of Great Yarmouth, that you do repair home, and bring with you, with as much speed as may be, a last of beer, to maintain your poor neighbours withal, and if any man disturb or let you, in this business, he shall suffer imprisonment of body. From Mousehold this 10th of August.

" By me Robert Kett.
" By me Thomas Aldrich."

But Yarmouth was obdurate. It ignored Kett's commands and threats, and was unmoved though Northampton had been routed. The nephew's legacies were left unpaid, and the last of beer remained unsent.

Thereupon Kett decided to take the town by

[1] F. W. Russell.

storm. A large body of rebels reached "the "island called Lovingland," and with cannon from Lowestoft came right up to the very walls of Yarmouth, only to be repulsed. This attack took place on 17th August.

The rebels came to a stand at the north end of Gorleston, "intending to batter the town from thence; which being perceived, a party of townsmen were privately detached to set fire to a large stack of hay on the west side the haven, which being duly executed, raised a prodigious smoke, and the wind being northerly, drove the said smoke directly upon the face of the enemy, which so blinded them, that they did not perceive the Yarmouth men coming upon them; whereby many of the rebels being unprepared, were slain, and thirty taken prisoners, who, with the six pieces of ordnance, were immediately brought to Yarmouth, and confined in close hold.

"The rest, being exceedingly irritated by the above disaster, dared to approach the very walls of the town, and to destroy as much as possible all the materials for the new haven, then in making across the Denes near the south gate, to which they did irreparable damages; but being driven thence by the ordnance from the walls

and mounts, they fled, and never appeared about the town afterwards." [1]

And that was the end of all Kett's hopes of rousing Yarmouth to insurrection.

The town took considerable pains to exclude and defeat the rebels, and to notify the Lords of the Council in London of its loyalty. Years later, in an address to Queen Elizabeth's Privy Council, the Yarmouth Corporation recalled its resolution and the injuries the town had suffered: "The said Kett with his rebels made attempt to take that town for their hold, which the inhabitants of that town would in no wise permit, or consent unto, but kept the town for the King's Majesty according to their allegiance, albeit Kett and the rebels besieged it, summoning and threatening it with fire and sword; nevertheless the said townsmen not only kept them out but drove them away, and took certain great ordnance from them, which they had gotten from Lowestoft and other places; and also they did slay, kill, and wound many of the said rebels: the which things the said rebels did revenge upon the said town of Yarmouth by spoiling the works of their haven, and stopping it up in the night times." [2]

[1] F. W. Russell.
[2] Swinden, "History of Great Yarmouth."

Repulsed at Yarmouth, Kett could now look for help nowhere away from his own army at Mousehold. No communications came to him from other parts of the country, no promise reached him from the throne of any early remedy for the ills of the countryside.

Yarmouth had appealed to London against the rebel leader, the Norwich citizens had implored help against him, and on every side the local risings had been dispersed.

It was a grim prospect before Robert Kett in those hot mid-August days.

On the 10th of August by royal proclamation Somerset was declared to be in command of the army that was to put down the revolt, and (according to Sotherton) "the King sent into Lincolnshire and other places of the realm, and mustered and took up a great number of soldiers, and also sent for divers lance knights and others strangers to make a power to suppress the said rebels."

The King's proclamation announcing Somerset's command, called on various persons to be ready in a week's time to march against the rebels. One copy ran as follows :—

"Whereas one Kett, a tanner, supported by great number of vile and idle persons hath taken upon him our royal power and dignity, and calleth himself master and king of

Norfolk and Suffolk, with derogation of our Imperial Crown and Majesty, and not content to persuade our subjects, whom we were well contented to receive to our mercy, to refuse our most gracious pardon, but causeth also a great number of our honest and good subjects to follow and aid him, and so continueth the rebellion in most vile sort, killing, spoiling, and keeping in fetters and chains gentlemen, serving-men, yeomen, and farmers, and other honest men, who have regard for their faith and duty unto us, robbing ladies' and widows' houses, seeking nothing but spoil and subversion of us and the good estate of the realm. We have appointed our most entirely beloved uncle the Duke of Somerset, governor of our person and protector of our realms, dominions, and subjects, with an army royal to go against them, and with God's help to subdue them to the terror of all others, whom like us we have appointed to march forward with all speed possible. So having reposed a special trust and confidence in your good towardness and readiness to serve us, we have appointed you to give your attendance upon our said Uncle, and therefore do will and require you immediately, upon the sight hereof, with all speed to put yourself in a readiness with an hundred able men, or so many more as ye are able to make and may trust unto you of your servants, tenants, and friends, well furnished with armour and weapon, whereof so many to be demi-lances or light horsemen, as ye can furnish, with able and good horses, and other convenient furniture, to be at our town of Waldon in our county of Essex the 17th day of this present month at the furthest: at which time and place order shall be given for the bringing of them thither to your contentation, requiring you not to fail as ye tender our pleasure, and will answer for the contrary at your perils. Given under our signet at our palace of Westminster the 10th day of August the third year of our reign.

"P. SOMERSET."[1]

[1] Cotton MSS. Vespasian, F. iii. 37.

But Somerset, if he ever meant to do so, found it impossible to take the command,[1] and a week later we get another proclamation calling upon the gentlemen of East Anglia to leave London and prepare to wait upon the Earl of Warwick :

" The King's Majesty, by the advice of his most entirely beloved uncle, the Lord Protector and the rest of his highness' council, straightly chargeth and commandeth all gentlemen of what estate, degree or condition soever they be, who hath their habitation and dwelling in Essex, to depart from the Court of his City of London, and other places near unto them, into their several habitations in the said county of Essex, with all convenient speed, there to remain till they shall know further of the King's Majesty's pleasure. Likewise such gentlemen as hath their habitations and dwelling in Suffolk, to depart into their said habitations, and there to remain until such time as they shall have commandment from the King's Majesty, or from the Earl of Warwick. And further that all Gentlemen, inhabitants of Norfolk, do repair to the said Earl of Warwick, so that they be with the said Earl, to attend upon him in the King's Majesty's army, in his conduct and leading for his highness' better service upon Saturday next following or Sunday at the furthest. And his said Majesty, by the advice aforesaid, most straightly chargeth all persons to whom it may appertain, to follow and execute with all convenient speed and diligence, upon pain of his highness' indignation and displeasure. Provided always, and

[1] " He could not do so without alienating the popular support which his domestic policy had brought him."—A. F. POLLARD, " England under Protector Somerset."

his highness nevertheless doth signify, that by this present proclamation it is not his Majesty's mind that any such gentlemen, as be of the ordinaries of his highness' chamber or household, should depart or go home. But that they shall give their attendance upon his highness here in the Court, as heretofore they were commanded, anything in this present proclamation notwithstanding.

" Given this 16th of August, in the 3rd year of his highness' reign." [1]

We know from Warwick's letter to Cecil,[2] asking strongly that Northampton may retain his commission—" if it might please your grace to use his service again, I shall be glad for my part to join with him; yea, rather than fail, with all my heart to serve under him for this journey, as I would be to have the whole authority myself," wrote Warwick—that the command was in Warwick's hands on 11th August, for so the letter is dated.

Five days later the expedition had started, and on 21st August the Earl of Warwick was at Cambridge.

[1] Cotton MSS. Titus. B. ii. 4.
[2] State Papers, Edward VI.

VIII

THE EARL OF WARWICK AT NORWICH

"That a populous and wealthy city like Norwich should have been for three weeks in the hands of 20,000 rebels, and should have escaped utter pillage and ruin, speaks highly for the rebel leaders."—*Victoria County History of Norfolk.*

CHAPTER VIII: *The Earl of Warwick at Norwich*

THE Earl of Warwick was a man of vastly different calibre to his friend the Marquis of Northampton. The latter was nothing of a soldier, whereas John Dudley, Earl of Warwick, was both resolute and ambitious in will, and of experience in warfare. The son of Dudley, Henry VII.'s powerful minister, whom Henry VIII. had beheaded, created Earl of Warwick and Lord Great Chamberlain on the death of Henry VIII., he had distinguished himself in the expedition against the Scots in 1547, and was on the eve of accomplishing Somerset's fall from power and ruling the Council as his successor.

Unscrupulous[1] and pitiless, with none of Somerset's sympathy for the common people, Warwick was to enjoy the brief triumph of his ambition, to order the execution of his rival, and then in his turn perish on the scaffold.

Warwick was plainly the man to put down the

[1] "The subtlest intriguer in English history."—A. F. POLLARD, "England under Protector Somerset."

Norfolk rising. Kett, it is true, made no movement southward, but the disaster to Northampton and the power of Kett's "commonwealth" at Norwich threatened the authority of the Royal Council. Somerset could do no more to check or redress the wrongs of the people, already he was in danger of losing office and life. The Protector had bidden the discontented peasantry return to their homes under a promise of pardon, and they had refused to obey. Since rebellion was persisted in, the sword must do its work, for the safety of the realm.

There was to be no repetition of Northampton's failure, and Warwick set out from London with "great number of lords, knights, and squires and gentlemen, with great store of armour, munition, shot, powder, ordinance shot," and native and foreign troops, "whose number is written to be 12,000."[1] Lord Northampton, Warwick's two sons, Ambrose Dudley and Robert Dudley (afterwards Earl of Leicester—the favourite of Queen Elizabeth), Sir Thomas Gresham, and Sir Edmund Knyvet, were amongst

[1] N. SOTHERTON. Nevylle puts it at about 14,000. Edward VI. in his *Journal* says the number was 6000 and 1500 horsemen.

Warwick's officers. The mercenaries were Germans.[1]

The army moved with great expedition and was at Cambridge by 20th August. Here Warwick was met by a deputation of fugitive aldermen and citizens from Norwich, who, "falling upon their knees, with weeping and lamentable voice," began a piteous tale of woe. They entreated the Earl, "that he would lay no grievous thing to their charge, for they were innocent persons and guilty of no crime. Yet they besought the mercy and favour of the Prince, for they had verily conceived an incredible grief at this miserable destruction and spoil of their country, and had further endured all extremity at the rebels' hands. In the end, to provide for their lives, they were constrained to fly the city, and with sword and fire were cast out, not only from the city, but from their wives and children, and all their friends. In so great

[1] "Aug. 20, Sir John Williams had warrant for £10, 10s. to Sir Thomas Smyth, Mr Secretary for so much paid to him, viz., £10 to Hudson leader of the 4 ensigns of Allemans footmen to the Earl of Warwick, lieutenant of the army advanced against the rebels of Norfolk, the same £10 to be deducted from Hudson's wages being 5s. per diem and 4 servants at 6s. apiece. Also 10s. to Humfrey Mychell sent to the said Hudson with the said money. This to be repaid of the sales."—Privy Council Register, Edward VI.

misery wherewith they were pressed on every side, they crave nothing else, but if in this common and exceeding fear, through ignorance and folly, unwittingly they have wrapped themselves in any offence, the same might not be imputed unto them, but upon their repentance and humble petition it might be pardoned."[1] A request was also added that Warwick would at once advance and destroy Kett.

The reply to this rather sorry exhibition was a mild rebuke and pardon, with advice to follow the army. The Earl said that "he perceived how great peril they were in, and that without doubt the strength of those men was great, which had driven them from all these things as dear unto them as life itself; affirming that they had done nothing amiss to his knowledge. In that they had left the city in so great fear and danger, it was but the infirmity of man, and to be borne withal. Notwithstanding, in one thing they were somewhat imprudent, that they withstood not these evils in the very beginning: for a few valiant and wise men might have despatched those companies in a moment, if, at the commencement, they had opposed themselves for the health of their country. Notwithstanding,

[1] Wood.

he granted pardon at their request, and offered the King's favour to them all; willing them, when they had furnished themselves with weapons, and with the furniture of soldiers, to be in a readiness to follow the host, having laces about their necks to be discerned from the rest." [1]

Leaving Cambridge the march was resumed, and the army, strengthened by reinforcements of country squires, was at Wymondham on 22nd August, and at Intwood, some three miles south of Norwich, on the following day. Here Warwick rested at Sir Thomas Gresham's "fair and large house," old Intwood Hall, and on the morning of 24th August, "of his clemency and for avoiding of bloodshed, and saving the gentlemen in captivity," [2] sent a herald to announce that war would be made against the city unless the gates were opened to the King's army.

The news of Warwick's approach, that "a captain, armour, bands of men, and all instruments for the terror of war, had been provided against them, and were ready and at hand," struck no fear into the hearts of Kett's men. It only stirred them so that "they began every day to fortify themselves, and to look about for all

[1] Wood.
[2] N. Sotherton.

things necessary, and to train themselves, that they might be the more able to make resistance."[1] Kett, on his part, hearing that a herald was at St Stephen's Gate, directed Augustine Steward, the deputy mayor, and Alderman Robert Rugg to learn what the herald's business was. So the two aldermen having been let out at a postern, met the herald and were informed that the Earl of Warwick, the King's lieutenant, was waiting to be received by the city. On this the aldermen could only bewail their own unhappy lot and implore the Earl to repeat the promise of pardon to all who would disperse. They declared " they counted themselves the miserablest men alive, which had endured so many and great discomfitures both in mind and body, as at the remembrance thereof all the parts of their body tremble. Nevertheless this one thing was added unto the rest, which increased the height of their calamity, grief and shame ; because that fidelity which they ought and earnestly desired to perform to his Majesty, they were not able to fulfil at this time, and judged themselves the unhappiest that lived in this age ; wherein they were ever compelled either to undergo the danger of their life, or the hazard of their dignity. Not-

[1] N. Sotherton.

withstanding, they hoped well of the King's Majesty, as those which had no ways bound themselves in any consent of these villainies, but had restrained (as much as was in them) the rest of the citizens, with great loss of their goods, and ever with an incredible danger of their lives. Moreover, they most humbly besought this one thing of the Earl, that because there were in the city an innumerable company of Kett's Camp, unarmed and poor (who, besides being through fear and conscience of their own wickedness holden guilty, moreover were weary of their doings, as which had filled the very desire of working mischief with the satiety of their furies), it would please him once again to try that which hath been often proved in vain: signifying that they greatly hoped (if at this time might be offered unto them again the hope of impunity) it would come to pass that forthwith they would lay down their weapons, without slaughter and bloodshed. Which thing (if it might come to pass) would be an eternal memory unto posterity, and a glory exceeding all victory, if they might carry home peace, and their weapons unstained with the blood of civil dissension." [1]

The herald at once carried this appeal of the

[1] Wood.

aldermen to Warwick, who, impressed by the notion " that this flame so dangerous and dreadful might be quenched without slaughter and bloodshed," determined to try the effect of an offer of pardon. All Warwick cared about was the break up of the rebellion. If this could be done without giving battle so much the better, for the rebels were strong enough to make the issue of such a battle no certain victory for the King's troops. There was also the fear that in the event of open hostilities—whatever the result—the rebels might decide to slay all their prisoners.[1]

So " after one quarter of an hour " the herald was back again at St Stephen's Gate, accompanied by a trumpeter. The portcullis was raised, the gates thrown open, and the herald, the trumpeter, and the two aldermen, with thirty or forty of Kett's men on horseback, jovial fellows these,[2] went in procession to Bishop's

[1] " He was, moreover, afraid lest the gentlemen, who were imprisoned in the Castle, and elsewhere, ' tossed and turmoiled with the great waves of fear,' might be slain : for the rebels were continually threatening them with death, and especially Sir Roger Woodhouse, whom they were very bitter against."—F. W. Russell.

Warwick's fear was natural, but the prisoners were safe from massacre.

[2] " Very pleasant and merry."—Blomefield.

Bridge Gate—"the gate next the camp." Here they halted, and after the trumpet had sounded, "great routs of rebels came flocking by heaps unto them from the hill."[1] The men on horseback got the people into order—"with a swift course they ran unto them, commanding, that dividing themselves, the one half should stand in rank against the other"—and the crowd was so huge that it covered "the space of a quarter of a mile."[2] The people were all in great good-humour, and cheered lustily: "God save King Edward! God save King Edward!" Presently, when the aldermen had got some sort of quiet, the herald, in full dress,[3] delivered, at considerable length, his message :—

"They were not ignorant, from the first time ever since they had wickedly taken up arms against their country, how many and sundry waies, by all means possible, labour and study, the King had emploied his care to the end to bring them from the crueltie of these villainies, whereby they had violated all the laws of God and man, to some consideration of their duties and regard of their own safetie; and had sent unto them messengers and proclaimers of peace not once but often, againe and againe. Notwithstanding, they regarded not, but ever despised, and by all means

[1] Wood.

[2] Sotherton.

[3] "Having on his rich coat-of-arms, as solemn ensignes of his office."

misused them, through their detestable madness and disloyaltie. But (now, in the sight of God) whither would they rush? Whither would they throw both themselves, and their goods with deadly furie? What measure would they put to their most trecherous madnesse? or what ende of their most vile Counsels? How long, being stirred up through pestilent lusts, which they had once suffered to enter their minds, would they, with deadly folly, continue to pursue their false and idle hopes of victory? How long would they adorne with counterfeit titles the foule impietie of mischievous treason? How long would they wrap in the false garments of seeming virtue their horrible fouleness and villainies? Finally, how long would they be holden bound with the fatal desire of these things, on their obtaining which, if such were allowable, the destruction of the Commonwealth would issue presently much more intolerable and lamentable? But, rather, now at the last instead of acting thus, they should look about them awhile, and apply both their minds and understanding, and mark thorouly, with more attentive eyes, their Commonwealth of which in all their talks, no less foolishly than wickedly and ungodly, they were wont to boast. Surely, then may easily be seene whether they be faithful subjects, and worthy the name of good citizens; which have taken up hostile arms against the King's Majestie; which have gathered together routs of wicked men despised and vile; which have brought upon their country (the common parent of us all) ungodly and sacrilegious hands; which have let the refuse of the people, and the vilest of all mortal men (cast out, for the most part, of all English Society) into the Commonwealth, to the destruction of the good, and overthrow of the kingdome; which have defaced with merciless fire, the greatest part of this most worthie Citie; which hath laid in most vile prison and bands, many worthy and excellent persons, and have slaine some with most extreme torture; which have utterly emptied the best furnished houses, and polled and

shaven the neighbouring villages ; which have alienated to their own use the goods of many (of late rich men, but now through their crueltie, miserable and needie), and carried them into their wretched Camp by most cruel robberies ; which have forged fained laws, false letters and commissions in the King's name ; which have profaned the temple of the great and mighty God ; overthrown the houses of private men ; wasted and spoiled the fields on every side ; which have converted all their thought, studies and enterprise to destruction, slaughter, wasting, burning and stealing ; finally, which have left nothing remaining, whither the rage and madnesse of their furie could further carrie them, but either their riotous lusts utterly devoured, or their foul importunitie scattered abroad. When they see themselves thus guilty of these so many, so great, and so horrible pollutions of wickednesse in the sight of God, their King, and the Commonwealth ; and when now they see all their goods and substance to be brought into that place, and so confiscate and lost, that to be in a worse condition than now they are in (for they are in the worst) they cannot be, if they would : then, let them think with themselves, into how large a sea of evils they have thrown themselves headlong ; and let them think what they may fear, over whose heads alwaies hangeth the just wrath of God (which surely can by no means be avoided) and the inevitable power of the King, offended and displeased. For his Majestie had decreed, not to suffer any longer these so great evils to abide in the bowels of his kingdome, neither to leave any longer unpunished and unrevenged, this so foul crueltie and intollerable boldnesse. And therefore had chosen the Earle of Warwick (a man of renowned honour and of great name) and unto this work appointed Generall from His Majestie who must pursue them with fire and sword ; and hath further injoyned him never to leave off until he had utterly rooted out that vile and horrible company. Notwithstanding, such is his great bounty and clemencie, that whom he

hath appointed a revenger of this desperate and wicked rout (if they persevere) the same also he would have to be (if they shall doe otherwise) a messenger and minister of his mercie; the which, except they would embrace it at this time, refusing all sinister advice, Warwick hath most solemnly sworne, shall never hereafter be offered unto any of them againe, but (as he was commanded by the King) he would pursue with fire and sword all the companions of that most pernitious conspiracy, the officers, ministers, and abettors thereof, as the most pestilent enemies to the King's Majesty; neither would he make an end of pursuing them, until they (which had defiled all places with their new, unheard-of and unpardonable treason, and had drowned themselves in such furious waves of wickedness) had received condigne punishment of God and the King." [1]

This speech was received with extreme disfavour by the rebels. A few "in fear trembled," [2] but most of those who heard what was said broke out in angry shouts and curses. Some denied that he was a real King's herald at all, and called him a traitor, sent from the landowners "to bring them asleep with flattering words and fair promises, in order to deceive them in the end, whereby napping as it were, and careless, they might the easier be taken, while

[1] Wood. But, according to Sotherton, Kett was excluded by name from the pardon: "If they would like natural subjects repent of their demeanour and humbly submit themselves to the King's mercy, his highness would grant unto them pardon for life and goods, Kett only excepted."

[2] N. Sotherton.

they feared no such things." [1] Others declared that the pardon only "seemed in appearance good and liberal," and would prove fatal in the end, for in reality it was nothing else than "barrels filled with ropes and halters." [2] The herald's gorgeous coat was objected to, and cries went up that it was made of old church vestments, and that the gentry had "put on him a piece of an old cope for his coat armour." [3] Threats were heard—"many things besides in their rage and fury, they uttered against him, while all round about poured forth the bitterness of their venom in cruel speeches, savouring of death itself." Then Robert Kett himself came on the scene and the disorder ended; for Kett took the herald to another part—but near the river—in order that he might proclaim his message to those who, because of the press of people, had been unable to hear him before.

It was while this second speech of the herald's was being delivered that trouble began. A rude boy,[4] made an indecent and offensive gesture at the herald, and a soldier, who had crossed the

[1] Wood.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] N. Sotherton.
[4] "With words as unseemly as his gesture was filthy."—Holinshed."

river to see what was taking place, was so angry at this that he shot at the boy with an arrow, and the boy fell dead. Immediately the cry of "treachery" was raised by the people, and a dozen or so horsemen went galloping to Mousehold, "exclaiming that the herald came not but for a train to have them all destroyed, saying: 'Our men are killed by the waterside.'"[1] The herald turned to Kett. It was useless to go on exhorting this excitable mob; the only chance was to get Robert Kett to make peace in the name of his followers. Would Kett come with him under a flag of truce to the Earl of Warwick?

The herald moved off quickly, and Kett went with him as far as the bottom of Stuart Hill. In those few minutes the rebel leader hesitated. He knew that Warwick was at hand with a formidable army, and that his own men were ill-armed. There was no hope now that the rising would spread, nowhere save at Mousehold and in Norwich had the revolt been successful. Further resistance meant much bloodshed and loss of life, and in the end could he hope to win any redress for the peasants unless help was forthcoming? And yet, he himself was not included in the general pardon, and what

[1] N. Sotherton.

assurance was there that peace would bring security to his followers, or that the promise of pardon would be fulfilled? Too often, in the past, the promises of a king and his ministers had been broken. Too often the laying down of arms had been followed by ruthless executions.

While Kett stood in anxious doubt a number of his men came tearing up, calling out, "Whither away, whither away, Mr Kett? If you go we will go with you, and with you will live and die."[1] Others besought their captain not to forsake them.

Kett thereupon made his irrevocable decision. He and his men would fight it out to the bitter end. As the herald began to get alarmed at the increasing numbers of those gathering round and at their demeanour, he implored Kett "to go back again and stay this concourse and tumult."[2] Kett at once complied—"who, being returned to his company, they were presently quiet, and went back all of them again into the camp."[3]

So the herald set off to tell the failure of his mission to the Earl of Warwick, and Kett retired to Mousehold to prepare for battle.

Warwick, satisfied that "neither by entreaty

[1] N. Sotherton.
[2] Wood.
[3] *Ibid*

nor fair promises, nor yet by fear of punishment, could the rebels be turned from their enterprise," brought his troops up quickly to the city. The portcullis was closed at St Stephen's Gate but a "master gunner discharged and broke the half gate and portcullis," and Lord Northampton and Captain Drury, who had previously distinguished himself in the Government service in the command of a body of soldiers in Suffolk, entered, "scoured the streets and killed divers rebels." At the same time Deputy Mayor Steward sent word that the gate called Brazen Doors hard by could easily be stormed, and himself caused St Benedict's Gate in the Westwick to be opened.

A certain number of pioneers were told off to break down the Brazen Doors, "where, having succeeded, they forced their way into the city, and killing many, drove the rebels from that place."

Warwick, with his main army, entered at St Benet's, and came straight to the market-place. Here Warwick began re-establishing the King's authority by promptly hanging sixty men, whom he found in the city, "without hearing the cause."[1] They were rebels, and that was cause enough.

[1] "Where (at the market-place) divers rebels were found and hanged that night."—N. SOTHERTON.

"Without hearing the cause, all of them were presently

Alarmed at this drastic proceeding, the law-abiding citizens, "with their servants, that had long been hid," came out of their dwelling-places, and cried for pardon. "To whom the Lord Lieutenant answered they should have pardon, and commanded every man home to his house, and to keep the same, and to take care that no rebels were therein sustained." [1] This reassuring speech "made a great number of hearts glad, that did as they were bidden."

It was at three o'clock [2] in the afternoon of Saturday, 24th August, that the ordnance went astray. For while Warwick, who had done much since the despatch of the herald in the early morning, was busy in the market-place hanging rebels, "without hearing the cause," and making glad the hearts of loyal citizens, the great bulk of his guns and ammunition arrived at St Benet's Gate and followed the army into the city. But the drivers of the gun-carriages, instead of turning to the right when they reached Charing Cross and so coming to the market-place, were ignorant of the road, and went

(as the manner of war is) manifestly convict of their wickedness, and received their last punishment."—WOOD.

[1] N. SOTHERTON.

[2] *Ibid.*

straight on to Tombland, crossed St Martin's Palace Plain, and actually passed out of the city at Bishop's Gate, on the very road to Mousehold, and so fell an easy prey to Kett's men, who "greatly rejoicing (for before they were utterly unprovided of such things) carried into the camp carts laden with guns, gunpowder and all kinds of instruments of war." [1] The redoubtable Captain Drury, hearing of the mishap, went promptly in pursuit, and a skirmish occurred at Bishop's Gate, with no great result.

Kett had now a distinct advantage in artillery, and his men were in high fettle. Warwick had his army in the market-place, but the rebels were also in the city, in great numbers. The main body was in Tombland, and ready to take the offensive; for the belief was that the King's troops could be routed as Northampton's had been. In the late afternoon, the rebels in the city "divided themselves in 3 companies, and began to assemble in many lanes where they thought by little and little they might cut off their enemies." [2] One company was near St Michael's, Coslany; another by St Simon's Church, Elm Hill, and St Peter's, Hungate, "by

[1] Wood.
[2] N. Sotherton.

the Elm and about the Hill next the corner"; and a third at St Andrew's Hall, "late the black friars." All were "in battle array," and there was serious fighting in the streets before nightfall. In addition to these three companies the rebels had friends in every part of the city.

The rebels began by cutting off a handful of soldiers who had strayed from the market-place, and "three or four gentlemen" were slain before help arrived. Warwick promptly moved off, to take vengeance, leaving only a few Welshmen to guard what cannon he had. At St Andrew's, Warwick's troops were greeted with a heavy discharge of arrows from Kett's bowmen,[1] but the arrival of Captain Drury, fresh from Bishop's Gate, turned the tide. For the captain had a company of arquebusiers, "young men of excellent courage and skill, who payed them home again with such a terrible volley of shot (as if it had been a storm of hail) and put them all to flight."[2]

More than 300 were killed—on both sides—in this engagement,[3] in addition to those whom the

[1] "A mighty force of arrows as flakes of snow in a tempest."—WOOD.

[2] WOOD.

[3] F. W. RUSSELL.

soldiers found " creeping in neighbouring churchyards and under the walls " and put to death. The main body of the rebels retreated from the city, and the fight was over " within one half hour." [1]

Against this defeat Kett could place a successful sally against the Welsh gunners. Some of the rebels had noted the smallness of the guard left in charge of the ordnance, and in Warwick's absence at St Andrew's, they rushed in considerable force on the astonished and terrified Welshmen. A man named Miles, " very skilful in discharging ordnance," led the charge, and shot the King's master gunner; the rest " when they saw he had fallen, some of them unarmed, others armed with staves, bills and pitchforks, running down the hill, made an assault upon the above-mentioned Welshmen, who at the first encounter (so great was their terror and so unlooked-for the attack), astonished and terrified by their disordered cries, and the horrible noise they made, leaving the baggage and carts, ran away on all sides, with much noise and great speed." [2]

This blow following the capture of the mis-

[1] N. Sotherton.
[2] Wood.

directed ordnance earlier in the afternoon, was "very hurtful to Warwick's men, since afterwards they wanted those things they had lost, while Kett's gunners discharged often the ordnance they had taken, and battered the city grievously."

Most of the guns were set up outside Bishopsgate and Conisford Gate, and when night fell upon Norwich on 24th August, though Warwick was within the city and Kett had withdrawn to Mousehold, it was hard to say who was likely to be the victor.[1]

All next day, Sunday, 25th August, there was

[1] How little Somerset understood the temper of Kett's men or the facts at Norwich may be gathered from the Protector's letter, to Sir Philip Hoby, of 24th August:

"The Earl of Warwick lieth near to the rebels in Norfolk, which faint now and would have grace gladly, so that all might be pardoned, Kett and the other archtraitors in the number. . . . They daily shrink so fast away that there is great hope they will leave their captains destitute and alone to receive their worthy reward. The which is the thing we most desire, to spare as much as may be th'effusion of blood, and that namely our own nation. . . . The ruffians among them and soldiers, which be the movers and chief doers, look for spoil. So that it seemeth no other thing but a plague and a fury amongst the vilest and worst sort of men. . . . In Norfolk gentlemen and all farming men for their sakes are as well handled as may be; but this broil is now well assuaged and in manner at a point shortly to be fully ended with the grace of God."—Harleian MSS., No. 523.

fighting in the streets in the south part of the city and houses aflame, while a fierce cannonade raged at Bishop's Gate. Warwick, on the flight of the rebels, determined to hold Bishops Gate against invasion, and "appointed Lord Willoughby with others to ward that street and gate." At night Warwick took what steps were possible to "compass and fortify all places so as to cut off from the enemy all entrance into the city,"[1] but he was not strong enough to prevent an incursion at Conisford, near the gate.

Warwick was at Steward's house in Tombland, "partaking of a caudel drinking for a quarter of an hour," when about ten o'clock on Sunday morning news was brought that the rebels were effecting an entry at Conisford, and that certain of them had crossed the river and were burning the houses on both sides of the way in Confisford Street.[2] They had also fired "corn merchandise and stuff" stored at the Common Staith. Their advance was checked, but the fires were left unextinguished, Warwick fearing to withdraw his men from the middle of the city.[3]

[1] Wood.

[2] Now called King Street.

[3] They "would have gone further had they not been expelled, for they meant to burn the whole city. Notwithstanding, the fire was suffered to burn to the end, for

Then came another unexpected attack by Kett's men from the north. They pushed on as far as the bridges, but were driven back with loss by the soldiers. Warwick thereupon ordered the complete destruction of White Friar's Bridge, and the other bridges to the north of the city. Fye, Blackfriars, and Coslany would also have been destroyed by his command, "had not reasonable cause been showed." [1]

The citizens now seemed in more grievous plight than ever. They saw their bridges broken, their gates destroyed, and their houses in flames, and they remembered the fate of Northampton's army. It was too evident to the burgesses, knowing from past experience the power of Kett's army, that Warwick's forces were not strong enough to save the city, and that it would be better for the Earl to depart before things became worse. It was better to be governed by Kett than to have the whole city detroyed. "Great astonishment and sorrow struck many men's minds," so that "languishing through despair and fear, they almost

that it was suspected that their firing thereof was only to bring the company to quench it whilst they, the rebels, might attempt the like in another place or else enter to do further mischief."—N. SOTHERTON.

[1] *Ibid.*

fainted, now devoid of all counsel." Filled with this despair and fear, the citizens came to Warwick and "besought him humbly, seeing that the number of his men was but few, and the power of the enemy great, and not to be resisted, to consult his own safety, to leave the city, and not suffer the matter to be brought to utter extremity." [1]

But Warwick knew that reinforcements were on the road and would have none of these counsels of despair. "Being a man of great and invincible courage, valiant, and mighty in arms, and one that thought scorn of the least infamy, he replied: 'What are ye so soon dismayed? And is so great a mist on the sudden come over your minds, which hath taken away the edge of your courage, that you would either desire this thing, or think it can come to pass while I am alive, that I should forsake the city? I will first suffer fire, sword, finally all extremity, before I will bring such a stain of infamy and shame, either upon myself or you.'" [2]

To clinch matters Warwick drew his sword,

[1] WOOD. "The best (of the citizens) advised him to depart till further puissance."—N. SOTHERTON.

[2] WOOD. "He valiantly answered by God's grace not to depart the city, but would deliver it or leave his life."—N. SOTHERTON.

as did all the rest of the nobles who were gathered there, and " commanded after a warlike manner (and as is usually done in greatest danger), that they should kiss one another's sword, making the sign of the holy cross, and by an oath, and solemn promise by word of mouth, every man to bind himself to the other, not to depart from the city before they had utterly banished the enemy, or else fighting manfully had bestowed their lives cheerfully for the King's Majesty." [1]

And so, having thus set his seal on a stout resistance, and trusting the arrival of more troops, Warwick went on to arrange for the billeting of his men.[2] His own headquarters were at Steward's house, and here Warwick had his arms put up, and " the ragged staff " remained in token of the Earl's victory for many a day on the gates and doors of the house.[3]

For the rest of that Sunday the enemy were kept at bay.

[1] Wood.

[2] " After this, because many soldiers had not been lodged nor housed a good space, was every man's house appointed to receive a company; the better to make them hearty, they had victuals furnished, which encouraged them much: then did every man take forth his stuff and other things before hidden in places (to defend them from fire), to minister to the needs of these men."—N. Sotherton.

[3] *Ibid.*

All the walls were carefully guarded, and the gates—for the most part broken down—" were delivered in charge to men of courage, and experienced in warlike affairs, to be defended upon every sudden occasion ; whereby it came to pass, that all the desperate and night incursions of the enemy were void and of none effect." [1]

On Monday, 26th August, came the welcome news to Warwick that the expected reinforcements, 1400 German " lanznechts," were at hand.

[1] Wood.

IX

THE END OF THE RISING

"The next day being the 26th of August, 1400 Switzers, good and valiant soldiers, came from London and entered Norwich, and were received by the Earl's forces with many vollies of shot and joy."—BLOMEFIELD, *History of Norfolk.*

"So ended the Norfolk rebellion, remarkable among other things for the order which was observed among the people during the seven weeks of lawlessness."—J. A. FROUDE, *History of England.*

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CHAPTER IX: *The End of the Rising*

THE Earl of Warwick was at dinner when the relief arrived, and the spirits of his troops and of the citizens at once revived in the presence of more than 1000 trained soldiers.[1] Shots were fired in joy, and hospitality was freely offered to these German mercenaries who had come to put down a rebellious English peasantry. There was no longer any talk in Norwich of asking Warwick to depart, but a ready confidence was expressed that now at last Kett and his rebels would be overpowered.

And while the city aldermen and burgesses entertained the lanzknechts and their wives, and Warwick's tired soldiers fired volleys in gladness of heart, Robert Kett and his men at Mousehold doomed themselves to destruction. For on that Monday the fatal decision was made to leave the high wooded ground, where the camp was

[1] "The Lord Lieutenant being at dinner, came about ten or eleven hundred lance knights, which after they had discharged their pieces to show their coming, were also lodged in divers houses, with many of their wives that came with them."—N. SOTHERTON.

placed, and to come down and do battle in a valley north of the city.

On Mousehold Heath the rebels had the advantage, and a victorious resistance might have been made had Warwick's army attacked. On open, level ground the advantage was all on the side of the professional soldier. The only excuse for going down into the meadows and taking the offensive was the need for securing a free passage through the city for provisions for the camp,[1] though in Kett's mind there may also have been anxiety to defeat Warwick before further reinforcements arrived.

In an evil moment for the peasants, certain old rhymes were freely quoted, and were accepted as prophecies of victory.[2] Two rhymes, in especial, were repeated throughout the camp, and accepted as proof of success. One ran :

> "The country gnoffes, Hob, Dick, and Hick,
> With clubs and clouted shoon

[1] "The Earl of Warwick . . . entered into the town of Norwich, which having won it was so weak that he could scarcely defend it, and oftentimes the rebels came into the streets killing divers of his men, and were repulsed again, yea and the townsmen were given to mischief themselves. So having endured their assaults three days and stopped their victuals, the rebels were constrained for lack of meat to remove."—Edward VI.'s *Journal*.

[2] N. SOTHERTON.

Shall fill the vale
Of Dussindale
With slaughter'd bodies soon."

Alas, for the country churls on Mousehold, the vale was to be filled with their own slaughtered bodies, not with the bodies of their enemies.

Another verse received equal respect as an utterance of prophecy :

"The heedless men within the dale
Shall there be slain both great and small."

And slain these heedless men were who left their strong defence on Mousehold—lured to their death on the strength of these vain predictions.[1]

One omen only was against the departure from the camp. A snake "leaping out of a rotten tree, did spring directly into the bosom of Kett's wife : which thing struck not so much the hearts of many with a horrible fear, as it filled Kett himself with doubtful cares."[2]

(This is the only reference to Kett's wife throughout the rising, nor is there any allusion

[1] "Such was their preposterous stupidity, in applying these equivocating prophecies to their delusion, that, believing Dussin's dale must make a large and soft pillow for death to rest on, and vainly apprehending themselves the upholsterers to make, who proved only the stuffing of the pillow."—BLOMEFIELD.

[2] WOOD.

to the presence of women and children in the camp.)

With cheerful belief that victory was before them, and in the highest spirits, the rebels broke their camp at Mousehold on that fateful Monday. "All their dens and lurking-places everywhere, which they had made on Mousehold of timber and other provision, were now set on fire, and the smoke rising from so many places, distant one from another, seemed to bring night almost upon the whole skies, and covered the plains with thick darkness." [1] This was to be no mere sally against the royal troops, to-morrow they would utterly destroy their enemies, and the city of Norwich and the whole county should henceforth be their camp.

On Monday night the march began, and "twenty banners and ensigns of war" were carried to Dussin's dale, the spot foretold for victory by the prophets.

It is impossible to place exactly this Dussin's dale,[2] but we know from the indictment [3] that the battle was fought in the parishes of Sprowston or Thorpe. The open, low-lying ground to

[1] Wood.

[2] Dean Stanley decided that it was a valley commonly known as Ossian's Vale.

[3] See Appendix for Indictment in full.

the north-east of the city, beyond the walls, about a mile from Mousehold, may be taken as the most probable scene of Kett's disaster.

By Tuesday morning, 27th August, the rebels had removed "their ordinance and munition and all other things clean from that place they were in before, and devised trenches and stakes wherein they and theirs were intrenched, and set up great bulwarks of defence before and about, and placed their ordinance all about them. That the gentlemen, the prisoners, should not escape, they took them out of their prisons in Surrey place, and carried them to the said Dussin's dale with them, which was not past a mile off."[1] To strengthen their position the rebels also dug a ditch across the highway, "and cut off all passage."[2]

Warwick, learning of the departure from Mousehold, "by the watch on Christ Church steeple," promptly set out to give battle. Taking "1000 Germans, and all his horsemen, and leaving the English foot soldiers in the town,"[3] he crossed Coslany Bridge and departed from the city by the gate of St Martin's

[1] N. SOTHERTON.
[2] WOOD.
[3] King Edward VI.'s *Journal.*

at the Oak, accompanied by the Marquis of Northampton, Lord Willoughby, Lord Grey of Powis, Lord Bray (who had fought in France for Henry VIII.), Ambrose Dudley, " besides of noble and valiant men a choice company."

Outside the city Warwick made another appeal to the rebels to surrender, promising pardon to all, save the ringleaders, who would leave the field, and threatening vengeance if they persisted in war. Sir Edmund Knyvet, Sir Thomas Palmer, and two others were sent on ahead to offer terms, and the accustomed speech is reported. Warwick's envoys are said to have asked the rebels " whether they would leave off their furies, and forsake their wickedness, cruelty, and purpose of making war against their country, now at the last ? for so great and incredible was the goodness of the King's Majesty, that although with an impiety (never to be forgotten) they had abused his Majesty and dignity, and stained themselves with everlasting notes of villainy, yet he had commanded once again to be offered unto them peace and pardon (notwithstanding all that they had committed), yea, to every one of them (one or two excepted) so as they would turn to duty now at the last (being led with repentance) from this course of malice

and wickedness ; but if they purposed peevishly and ungodly to persist in their madness, and to try the end, now let them know, there was come at the last the just punishment of their foolish lightness and disloyalty ; and Warwick himself, although late, yet the sure revenger of so horrible a conspiracy." [1]

But to all this the people only answered stoutly that they would not give up their purpose.[2]

Warwick, on the failure of this mission, turned to his troops and told them to treat the rebels not as men but as brute beasts—to be exterminated :—" Invade the enemy valiantly, and without doubting, take and regard the company of rebels before you, not for men, but for brute beasts, indued with all cruelty. Do not let them suppose that they are coming out to fight, but to take punishment, and at your hands these most ungratious robbers speedily require it. They are the bane of their country, set on overthrowing Christian religion and duty—to be laid even with the ground, afflicted, punished, and utterly rooted out. In short, these rebels are the most cruel beasts, and they strive with incurable madness against the King's Majesty." [3]

[1] WOOD. [2] *Ibid.* [3] NEVYLLE.

The soldiers, eager enough for the battle, accepted their commander's view of the rebels, and the fight was soon raging.

At the first charge of Warwick's cavalry, Kett's lines were broken in confusion. The rebels had placed their prisoners, who were chained together, in the forefront, but not one of them is known to have been slain. For when Miles, Kett's master gunner, a daring and courageous man, who had been conspicuous in the city at the capture of Warwick's guns, killed the royal standard-bearer with an iron bullet early in the battle, Warwick's horsemen, seeing him fall, charged with terrific force, and at the same time the mercenaries "fired their pieces with such a terrible volley of shots," that Kett's front ranks turned and fled, and this enabled the prisoners to escape to Warwick's lines.

The nerve of Robert Kett failed him on that critical day, and he was powerless. Against his better judgment he had sanctioned the departure from Mousehold, and his will seems to have been paralysed by the sense of impending doom. He was really exhausted with the strain of the long responsibility. It was plain from that first charge that his men could not stand against Warwick's professional soldiers, and

the rude intrenchments, hastily thrown up in the valley, could not stay the onward rush of these trained and disciplined troops. Again and again an attempt was made to rally the beaten men, but the onslaught was too great to be withstood. Hitherto the rebels had been the attacking party, now in this fatal Dussin's dale they were driven like sheep, and pounded to death. The battle speedily became a rout and a massacre of flying men.

Kett's army simply could not face, on the level, the assault. "Instead of abiding the encounter, they like sheep confusedly ran away headlong, as quickly as they could. But through the noise and cry of our men following, even now in the last obstinacy of treason, when their fierce and boiling minds had taken up, I wot not what secret flames of hatred and grief (as wild beasts being turned from their desperation, and remembrances of their villainies, into rage and madness), returning speedily from their flight, they with deadly obstinacy withstood our men a little while: such, however, was the force of the shot, and the eagerness of our men to rush upon them (for like unbridled horses, being greedy of the victory, they broke into the host of the enemy), that Kett's army being

beaten down with the hot assault, and overthrown on every side, were almost with no labour driven from their standing." [1]

Early in the afternoon, when all was lost, Robert Kett rode quietly away from the field. The rising was over, and for him there could be no pardon. The only hope of safety lay in flight.

With the courage of despair, and in the midst of a general and disorderly rout, a last stand was made by one body of rebels. Some one called out, "Better die manfully in fight, than be killed like sheep as we run," [2] and at these words a recovery took place. A barricade was hastily erected, and a considerable number of men stood ready to maintain their ground.

"After, when they had furnished themselves with swords and other weapons, which lay scattered upon the ground, everywhere among the heaps of the dead bodies; and had cast spears, javelins, and sharp stakes in the ground before them; and had so arranged their carts and carriages as to form a secure and excellent barricade; they swore, each to the other, to lay down their lives manfully in that place or else, in the end, to get the victory." [3]

[1] Wood. [2] *Ibid.* [3] Nevylle.

Then the members of this brave and desperate company pledged one another in what must have been to many a final draught—doing this "in sign of good luck, and in token that their minds were vowed to die together"—and "with prayers and solemn promises fortified themselves for the battle." [1]

Warwick, perhaps in recognition of the courage of these men, was no sooner told of this stand than he sent a herald to promise pardon to all who surrendered, and to announce that no quarter would be given to those who continued in arms.

The rebels, with the recent hangings in the market-place in their mind, had confidence neither in the herald, nor in Warwick's mercy, and replied firmly that they would rather die fighting than yield.

"They would willingly lay down their weapons, they said, if they were persuaded that that promise of impunity would prove their safety; but they had had already experience of his cruelty upon their companions, which was to them an undoubted sign, as they firmly believed, that the mention of pardon, deceitfully offered by the nobles, was made only in order that they, being by a vain and false hope of mercy (as by snares) circumvented, and overcome, should all at the last be led to torture and death. And, that in truth, whatsoever might be pretended, they knew

[1] NEVYLLE.

well and perceived this pardon to be nothing else but a cask full of ropes and halters, and therefore die they would." [1]

Warwick, still reluctant to prolong the battle, then sent word that he would come himself, and give his promise in person, if they would then lay down their arms. To this they all answered, that if that were done, they would believe him, and resign themselves to the will and authority of the King.

It seemed to the remnant of the rebel army that, if this was indeed a real promise of pardon, there was nothing left for them but to yield. Their leader was gone. Thousands of their comrades were dead or dying around them, thousands were being hunted to death as fugitives. It were doubtless better to die in honest fight than to be butchered like sheep, but it might be better to live than to die in battle.[2]

[1] NEVYLLE.

[2] 3500 were slain, according to F. W. Russell.

Edward VI. in his *Journal* puts the number at 2000. Somerset, writing to Hoby on 1st September, at "more than 1000."

"Amongst Warwick's officers slain were Robert Knyvet, son and heir of Charles Knyvet, Sir Thomas Woodhouse, priest, and six other 'gentlemen'—all buried at St Peter's, Mancroft. Two gentlemen, 3 of Captain Drury's gunners, and 6 soldiers were buried at St Martin's at the Palace. Four esquires were buried at St Simion and St Jude's, Elm Hill."—F. W. RUSSELL.

So Warwick came out to the barricade, and at his command the herald duly read the King's commission, with its promise of pardon to all who submitted.

"Which, being read (because therein pardon was most solemnly promised to all), and trusting to it they laid down their weapons, every man; and all of them, as with one mouth, thankfully cried, 'God save King Edward! God save King Edward!'" [1]

This was the end of the battle. It was then four o'clock and, with the surrender of this last body of men, Warwick's victory was complete. It was no mere defeat of the rebels, it was a thorough annihilation of their army. With their own hands the rebels had destroyed their fastnesses on Mousehold; they had offered themselves for slaughter by going down into the meadows; and now in the late afternoon of 27th August they were beaten by the King's troops, and the Earl of Warwick was master of the situation. The rising was crushed, the good fight put up for liberty by the peasants was finished. Kett's army was broken to pieces by that false move from Mousehold to the meadows, and the hope of the country folk died with the insurrection.

[1] Wood.

Great was the rejoicing in the city that evening at Warwick's victory. Two barrels of beer were provided by the Corporation at the cost of twelve shillings, and the liquor was "drank at the market cross amongst the soldiers as they came home out of the field after it was won." [1] All the booty of the rebels was also given to the soldiers, and they promptly sold it in the city market and "made good pennyworths thereof."

That same evening Robert Kett was taken. Riding from the battlefield he had gone north, hoping, perhaps, to reach the coast. But at Swannington, only eight miles from Norwich, both horse and rider were too tired to go farther, and here Kett took refuge in a barn. So tired was he that only when he had thrown himself down to rest did Kett notice that there was a cart full of hay hard by, with men unloading it. Before he could move the rebel leader was recognised, and the men had seized him. Kett made no resistance; weariness was upon him, and great heaviness of heart. They brought him to the house of one, Master Richards, and though he was left there in a room, "with a child seven or eight years old," while they fetched Mrs Richards from church, Kett made no

[1] City Chamberlain's Accounts.

attempt at flight. Mrs Richards, on her arrival, " rated him for his conduct, but he only prayed her to be quiet and to give him meat."

The summer night descended. On Robert Kett, worn to breaking point, a captive in the house of Mr Richards at Swannington. On dead and dying in Dussin's dale. On the peasants, fugitive and dispirited, and in prison. On victorious Warwick and his mercenaries. And on Norwich burgesses exulting that the battle had taken place well outside the city, and that the grievous rebellion had at length been put down.

Very early next morning Robert Kett was carried off a close prisoner to the Earl of Warwick's lodging.[1]

[1] N. SOTHERTON. 20s. was paid " to him that apprehended Kett the rebel " on 3rd February 1550. See Privy Council Register, Edward VI.

X

AFTER THE RISING

"So ended the Norfolk rising like every other peasant's revolt, in disillusion and defeat. The stars in their courses fought against them; it was not possible to restore an agricultural system which was economically wasteful and effete, and it is always hard to restrain the greed of those who control the government."—POLLARD, *Political History*.

CHAPTER X: *After the Rising*

WARWICK returned to the city in triumph after the battle. And now the citizens, who on Sunday, when the issue seemed uncertain, had prayed the Earl to depart, on the Tuesday evening "extolled him with commendations to the heavens."

The clamour for the blood of the defeated peasants commenced directly the result of the battle at Dussin's dale was known, and the worth of the royal promises of pardon was quickly seen.

On the morning of 28th August the executions began, and throughout that day the hangman was kept busy. Nine of the bravest of the peasants, including Miles, who had slain the King's standard-bearer, were taken at the Oak of Reformation,[1] and there hanged, disembowelled alive ("these are the judgments of traitors in our country"[2]), beheaded, and quartered—the heads being taken away to be "fixed on the

[1] N. SOTHERTON.
[2] *Ibid.*

tops of the towers of the city, the rest of the body bestowed upon several places, and set up to the terror of others." [1] Then 300 peasants were hanged on trees, outside the city, and "left to the fowls of the air." In Norwich itself forty-nine prisoners were hanged in the market-place. It was nothing to the Earl of Warwick that these prisoners had surrendered on the implicit, oft-repeated promise of the King's pardon.

Still all that day the cry was sent up for more executions, and the wealthier citizens and "many of the gentlemen, carried away with displeasure and desire of revenge, laboured to stir up the mind of Warwick to cruelty. Not contented with the punishment of a few they would have rooted out utterly the offspring and wicked race of them, and were so eager and earnest in it that they constrained Warwick to use speech unto them openly." [2]

Even the Earl of Warwick, hard and unscrupulous as he was, shrank with disgust from the vindictive savagery that called out for a general massacre of the prisoners. Besides, if all the peasants were slain who was to do the agricultural work in the country? He turned

[1] N. SOTHERTON.

[2] *Ibid.*

on the squires and burgesses with impatient reproof:

"There must be measure kept, and above all things, in punishment with death, men must beware lest they exceed. I know well such wicked doings deserve no small revenge, and that the offenders are worthy to be most sharply chastised. But yet, how far shall we go? Are we never to be satisfied? Is there no place of pardon? Shall we hold the plough ourselves, and harrow over our own lands?" [1]

Robert Kett and his army held for weeks the lives of landowners and aldermen in their hands, and showed mercy. Now in the hour when the peasants were laid low, no voice was raised to call to remembrance the humaneness of the rebels. Neither justice nor pity were invoked on behalf of the vanquished, and vengeance on the men who had for a brief space set authority and landlord-rule at nought was the one desire of the conquerors.

But the common-sense of Warwick's speech had effect. The bodies of the slain were buried beyond Magdalen Gate, "lest some infection or sickness might be produced," that same night.

The appetite for blood having been thus satisfied (if somewhat too moderately for the taste of some), and Warwick having declared the executions at an end, on the following day,

[1] Wood.

29th August, the Earl, with all his nobles, knights, and squires, " and a great company, not only men, but women, of all degrees and ages," betook themselves to prayer, and went in state to the church of St Peter's, Mancroft, " there to offer up their prayers and praises to Almighty God for the success they had met with."

This service became an annual matter.

" By the good advice of Thomas (Thirlby) Bishop of Norwich, and with the assent of the mayor, sheriffs, and common council, it was ordained, enacted, and thought good, that from henceforth and for ever, upon the 27th day of August yearly, for the benefit that was obtained for our deliverance that same day, the mayor for the time being shall command his officers the day before to charge all the constables of every ward that they shall give warning to every inhabitant within their wards to spere [secure] and shut in their shops, and that both man, woman, and child, repair to their Parish Church after they have rung in, at the hour of seven of the clock in the morning ; and there to remain in supplication and prayers to God, hearing the divine service of the church that shall be sung or said, and to give humble thanks to God, and pray for the preservation of the King's Majesty heartily, and for the deliverance of this city from the great peril and danger it was in." [1]

It was further decreed that in every parish, " the service once done," a solemn peal of all the bells should be given, and a sermon preached. The ordinances of mayors and councils are not appointed to endure " for ever," however they

[1] F. W. Russell, from " The City Book."

may be decreed, but as late as 1667 this service of thanksgiving " for the deliverance of the city from Kett's rebellion " was performed.[1]

Warwick remained in Norwich till 7th September, and then departed for London, carrying in his train as captives Robert and William Kett, for whose safe keeping one Thomas Audley was responsible.

All the spoil taken in the camp of the rebels belonged to the King, and Warwick was detained for those ten days in Norwich doing judgment. The landowners continued to make accusation against certain rebels, not so much now for the purpose of seeing their enemies hanged, but in order to obtain a share in the confiscated properties—for the Ketts were not the only men of moderate substance who had taken up arms at Mousehold.

Sir Thomas Wodehouse, writing from Wroxham (having gone there from Yarmouth) to his brother Sir William Wodehouse in London, on 3rd September, refers to these proceedings [2] :

" You shall understand that my lord of Warwick doth execution of many men at Norwich. And the gentlemen crave at his hand the

[1] F. W. Russell, from " The Mayor's Book."
[2] State Papers, Edward VI., Domestic.

gift of the riches of them, and do daily bring in men by accusation. But I have neither accused any man, nor yet have asked the gift of any, although I am spoiled of 2000 sheep and all my bullocks and horses with the most part of all my corn in the country. All the ordnance and spoil that was taken in the camp is the King's. I moved my lord for my 2 pieces of brass but I cannot have them at his hands yet he is very gentle to me."

The citizens continued in their praises of Warwick, applauding "with most excellent speeches the fame of so worthy a captain, and the memory of so great courage; and attributed to his wisdom and good success the preservation of their lives, their wives and children, finally all their goods and possessions," [1] and this, notwithstanding that their wives and children, and the great bulk of their goods and possessions, had been quite unhurt during the weeks of Kett's supremacy in Norwich.

Not content with speaking "all manner of good of him" the city fathers also spent 7s. "for setting up the ragged staff [Warwick's arms] in silver paper at all the gates of the city" beside

[1] Wood.

the king's arms.[1] This, however, gave great offence to some of the citizens, who thought it "not meet to have any more kings than one."

At length Warwick, with high affairs of State before him, was free to leave. The rebellion was over. The landowners could return to their estates, Steward, Cod, and their fellow-aldermen resume the peaceful government of the city, and the peasants wander homeless as before.

Robert Kett and his brother were fast in the Tower of London by 9th September,[2] and the special commission of Oyer and Terminer for their trial opened on 23rd November, and on 26th November they were found guilty of high treason and condemned to a traitor's death.

In that October 1549, while the Kett's were prisoners in the Tower—William, whose part in the rising had been comparatively small, was allowed to go at large in the Tower—Warwick, fresh from his Norfolk triumph, overthrew the Protector Somerset, and climbed to the chief power in the realm. On 12th October, Somerset was arrested by order of the Council, by Warwick's efforts, and on the 14th the Protector was

[1] City Chamberlain's Accounts.

[2] "£50 were paid to Thomas Audley on 8th September, as "reward for bringing Kett."—Privy Council Register, Edward VI.

brought to the Tower, to remain the fellow-prisoner of Robert Kett, till the latter should be removed to die.

The judges at the trial of the Ketts were Sir Richard Lister, Sir Edward Montague, Sir Richard Cholmeley, Sir Edmund Mervyn, Sir William Portman, and Sir John Hinde. The names of the jurymen were Richard Brine, gent., John Barnes, William Lowe, John Coke Sadler, Roger a Wood, Edward Gregory, William Rayner, Richard Brown, Miles Child, Clement Dawes, John Hunsdon de Lane, Thomas Ward, Thomas Shepherd, William Pay of Sudbury, and John Sadgrove.[1]

The formal charge against Robert Kett[2] declared that he ("otherwise called Robert Knight") had made an insurrection and levied war against our Lord the King; on the 20th of July, "for six weeks next ensuing," on Mousehold Heath, and at other places in Norfolk, by "proclamations, hue and cry, and the ringing of bells," collecting adherents to the number of 20,000; that he had caused bills to be written inciting people to levy open war against the King, "as also to rob and spoil" the King's

[1] F. W. Russell.

[2] See Appendix for the Indictment in full.

faithful subjects; that he and his confederates had imprisoned knights, esquires, and gentlemen at Mount Surrey—"shouting out with these words in English 'kill the gentlemen'; and that at Dussin's dale, on the 27th of August, they had slain many faithful subjects of the King.

The charge against William Kett was in very similar words. He had "excited rebellion, and insurrection," and on the 16th day of August, and two following days, had conspired with Robert Kett "to destroy the people"; also on the 20th day of August "he did give to Robert Kett and the other traitors comfort, aid, and counsel in their traitorous designs." [1]

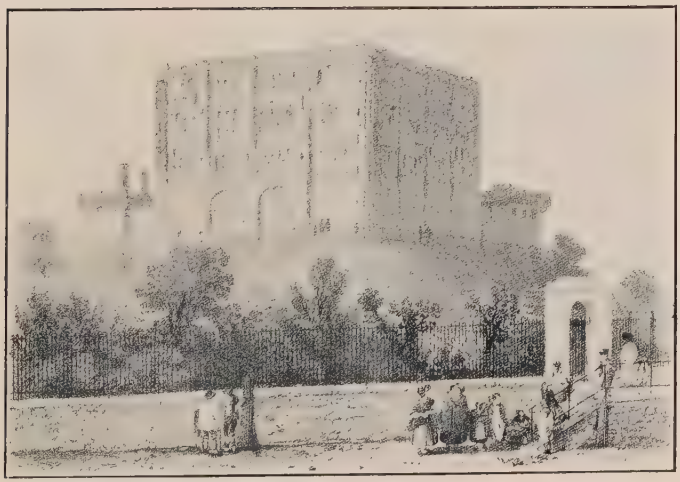
Both men pleaded guilty to the indictments against them, and no defence was offered. What defence was possible? Kett had taken up arms

[1] This reference to 20th August is not clear. According to Holinshed, "it was generally thought William Kett would have been certain of pardon (he having done but little in these commotions), if he had not played the part of traitorous hypocrite: for upon his submission at first to the Marquis of Northampton, he was sent back to his brother, to persuade him and the rest to yield: though he promised to do so, yet, upon his coming into the camp, and seeing the great multitude about him, he did not only dissuade him from it, but told him the Marquis had but few soldiers with him, and was not able to resist such a force as his." If Holinshed's statement is true the 20th should be the 1st of August.

without royal permission, he had endeavoured to do the work of King and Parliament in his county of Norfolk, and he had resisted, successfully for a time, at least, the forces of the Crown. His work had come to nought; his own mistake on that fatal Monday when the camp was broken up had brought the movement to its end. But still there was the memory of those few good weeks when he had done justice at the Oak; when the mighty had been tumbled from their seats, and the poor and the disinherited had lived in freedom, and the earth and its fulness had been restored to the common people.

To plead "not guilty" was to deny these things. If to strive manfully and forcibly for the rights of the landless was to be a traitor to the King, then a traitor, unmistakably, was Robert Kett. Fate had decided against him in the appeal to arms, and to escape the doom of a traitor was impossible. As he had faced life courageously, and dared to voyage on dangerous waters, so would Robert Kett face death calmly. To die a traitor was but to pay the penalty of defeat, the common lot in those rough times of all who ventured boldly in public life. A few years more and both Protector Somerset and the Earl of Warwick himself would die the death of traitors.

Norwich Castle, 1784



Norwich Castle, 1830

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After the Rising

On the 26th of November the capital sentence, with all its horrors, was pronounced against Robert and William Kett.[1] They were not taken to Tyburn as the sentence decreed, but three days later were delivered out of the custody of the Tower to the keeping of Sir Edmund Windham, High Sheriff of Norfolk, to be taken by him to execution in their native county. Then came a hurried journey back to Norfolk, and on 1st December the sheriff and his prisoners were in Norwich.

It was hot summer-time when Kett had ruled at Mousehold, and when he had fled on that rueful August day from Dussin's dale. And now on the return it was bleak winter, and all the countryside looked dreary, cold and lifeless.

For six days Robert Kett lay in fetters in the Guildhall, and then on the morning of 7th December he was drawn on a rough hurdle through the streets to Norwich Castle, "and then and there over the walls of the same castle, in obedience to the King's command, was hanged in chains."[2]

On the same day William Kett was hanged in chains from the top of Wymondham Church tower.

[1] See Appendix.

[2] The Inquest on his death.

And so the Ketts, having fought the fight, with such weapons as were to hand in the sixteenth century, and having kept the faith they had pledged to the peasant folk of Norfolk, passed from the hands of sheriffs and hangmen to the rest that remains—for victor and vanquished. True, their bodies were denied the quiet of the grave, and swung uneasily for many a day and night—preaching to all wayfarers the appointed heritage of the rebel, the end allotted to the loser in social and political strife. Failure was the witness of these gibbeted figures on Norwich Castle and Wymondham Church. The mournful creaking of the chains ; the despised and crumbling bodies—expiating in shame the deeds of the strong mind and resolute will they had once housed ; the constant, visible presence of death and decay in the very midst of the people—all proclaimed the failure of rebellion. Who could pass by Norwich Castle, or gather to prayer in the old church at Wymondham, and not see the broken flesh fluttering in the wind ? The children would learn that the ghastly scarecrow swinging in the air was all that was left of the mighty Kett, who but recently had held sway over Norwich and all around, and who had dared to meddle with Government and set himself up above

the landowners of the country. Now he was set up higher still—in such manner would all who dared follow in his steps be raised above their fellows.

Yet there were some who could not look upon that poor body, waving on high above the castle, and not see in it a pennon of the good cause, a torn banner of the fight for freedom, and gaze on it with reverence as upon the tattered flag of a famous regiment hanging, when its work is done, in the quiet of a great church. Country people coming to market were moved to pity and had been heard to say strange things.

" John Redhead, of St Martin's Parish, worsted weaver, saith, That upon a market day not a month passed, whether it was Wednesday or Saturday, he with certainty knoweth not, being in the market upon his business, he saw two or three persons, men of the country standing together, and he heard the one of them speak to the other, looking upon Norwich Castle, towards Kett, these words, viz.: 'Oh! Kett, God have mercy upon thy soul, and I trust in God, that the King's Majesty and his council shall be informed on it betwixt this and midsummer even, that of their gentleness thou shalt be taken down, by the grace of God, and buried, and not hanged up for winter store; and set a quietness in the realm; and the ragged staff shall be taken down also of their own gentleness from the gentlemen's gates in this city, and to have no more King's arms but one within this city under Christ, but King Edward VI., God save his grace.' Which persons, he saith, he never knew them nor cannot name them." [1]

[1] F. W. Russell, from " The Book of the Mayoralty."

On 26th February 1550, a man was heard to say " that 500 of the Mousehold men were gone to the great Turk, and the Dauphin, and will be here again by midsummer." [1]

But the civic authorities were not idle. Kett should become no popular hero if they could help it. If the infamy of his death, and the spectacle of his rotting flesh were not sufficient then obloquy must be heaped upon his name and reputation.

To effect this successfully, an account of the rising written in Latin, by one Nevylle, was published in 1575 and was ordered to be used as a text-book, in place of the works of classical authors, in the Grammar School. Nevylle's version of the story, called " De Furoribus Norfolciensum," was so used for several years. It was based in the main on Sotherton's MS., and, violently anti-popular in tone, abounds in the fiercest epithets against Kett and his men.

The bodies were left hanging until (in Robert Kett's case, at least) they had literally fallen to pieces in corruption.[2] On 13th January the

[1] F. W. Russell, from " The Book of the Mayoralty."

[2] " Until that unhappy and heavy body (through putrification ensuing) fell down, at length."—Wood.

inquest was held in the Guildhall in Norwich.[1] At this inquest it was shown that the property of Robert Kett consisted of the Manor of Wymondham, obtained by grant from the Earl of Warwick in 1546, and valued at £4 per annum; certain lands formerly belonging to the Hospital of Burton Lazars, also obtained from Warwick, and valued with two tenements, at "Cakewick Field near the marlepits" at Wymondham, at 20s. per annum; and the manors of Melior's Hall and Lethers Hall, called Gunvill's Manor, valued at £13, 6s. 8d., per annum, and mortgaged to Richard Colyer for £200.

All this property was confiscated under the death sentence, and on 18th May 1550 it was granted by the crown to Thomas Audley, "in consideration of the good, true, faithful and magnanimous services lately performed for us in the contest with our unnatural subjects in Norfolk."[2] Audley is not mentioned as having taken part in any battle against the rebels, but he was the responsible keeper of Kett on the journey from Norwich to London.

So the last echoes of the rebellion passed, and

[1] See Appendix for copy of this document in full.

[2] Patent Rolls, Edward VI. See Appendix for copy of this grant in full.

Thomas Audley entered into possession of the lands Kett vacated when he started out from Wymondham on that bold march to Mousehold.

The rising failed, and was doomed to failure, apart from the disastrous move to Dussin's dale. It was too exclusively an agrarian revolt. It was in vain that Kett looked for aid in the towns. Weavers and cobblers might sympathise with the peasants, but the prosperous citizens of Norwich cared nothing for the enclosures that drove thousands off the land. On the contrary, shrewd burgesses saw that there was more profit to be made from sheep and wool than from the cultivation of the soil, and more " profit " meant more trade, more business, more money. What if people are dispossessed, and driven from the fields their fathers have tilled, to seek their bread as vagabonds in desolate places, if sheep or cattle (pheasants or deer) bring money to the nearest towns ? Mayor Cod, and Alderman Steward, and the townsmen of Yarmouth and other places, were content that Kett and his rebellious peasants should die if trade advanced. It was only the poorer workmen who suffered from the rise in prices of food stuffs.

Then the movement lacked a wide organisa-

tion. No John Ball and preaching friars had carried a common message of revolt from village to village, binding the peasants together in clubs and unions to prepare for a day of restitution—as in the years preceding the Great Uprising in 1381. Though in those early years of Edward VI. the whole countryside was angered against the enclosures, or against the changes in religion, and the rural people seethed in discontent, there was neither unity nor method in the various insurrections. The risings were, in each case, local, and the want of communication between the counties was fatal to national success.

There was a want of leadership, too, in most places. Robert Kett did all that one man could do in Norfolk, and, proving his capacity in a thousand ways, was trusted to the full by the people. But in no other county was such a leader as Kett to be found, and the smaller risings in Norfolk and elsewhere collapsed because they were ill led. To Mousehold came all rebels in Norfolk and Suffolk, for they had no confidence in anyone save Kett. We know not even the names of the peasant leaders elsewhere in 1549. It was quite otherwise in 1381.

Kett must have counted on the co-operation of

other popular leaders, as Wat Tyler did, and to the end he was disappointed.

The Norfolk Rising was the last great revolutionary movement of the common people in England. The Civil War was mainly an affair of the middle class and the nobility, and it left the social question out of account. Riots and mob violence exist even to our own day, but never since 1549 have the people risen to redress their wrongs by force of arms.

Lower and lower sank the town and country labourer after the Norfolk Rising. The enclosures went on unhindered, and at the second great period in the latter part of the eighteenth century and early years of the nineteenth century, when the commons that had survived earlier extinction were absorbed by the landowners, no rising took place, no strong protest was uttered. All feeling for liberty was dead in the labouring people, and though as soldiers and sailors they could still prove their endurance and bravery, a brutish ignorance hung over the land.

Only in the nineteenth century does the social question once more agitate the people, and is resolution made to end the oppression and miseries of the poor. But now it is seen by

working-class leaders in England that not by bows and arrows, or by guns and gunpowder, but by parliamentary legislation is this end to be made. . The weapons are changed, but the old cry for social justice uttered by Robert Kett still rings in our ears, and by many mouths is it said that the land of England must no more be possessed by the few, to the exclusion of the many. For hope still goes marching on.

The Duke of Somerset survived Robert Kett for two years, and went to the scaffold in January 1552. Eighteen months later, and John Dudley, Earl of Warwick, now become Duke of Northumberland,[1] proclaims his daughter-in-law, Lady Jane Grey, Queen of England, and calls on East Anglia to support her claim. But there is no response to his call; neither peasant nor landowner will follow where he leads. Norfolk rallies to the standard of Queen Mary, and the executioner of Somerset is in his turn brought to the scaffold.

On 22nd August 1553—just four years after his victorious entry into Norwich—Warwick died, as his father before him had died, a traitor's death, by the executioner's axe, on Tower Hill. And never was traitor's death less honoured in England. With the death of

his son Ambrose (created Earl of Warwick, 1561), who, though thrice married, was childless, the title became extinct in 1581.

The Kett family has flourished in Norfolk. There are many good citizens bearing that name at the present time in Norwich, and the churchyard at Wymondham shows the burial-place of more than one descendant of the famous rebel.

The name of Cod, too, can still be found in Norwich, and the charity of the much troubled mayor of 1549 to the Great Hospital in the city was enjoyed and commemorated within the memory of living man.[1]

[1] F. W. Russell. Cod left property to the Great Hospital and the item is mentioned in the Charity Commissioners' Report for 1839.

APPENDICES

MET BOROUGH OF
PUBLIC
LIBRARIES
POPLAR

APPENDIX I

A TABLE OF DATES

1489. Act of Parliament passed "against pulling down of towns" for pasture. (This Act was quite inoperative.)
1509. Accession of Henry VIII.
1515. Act passed ordering all "towns" pulled down to be rebuilt within a year, and all lands turned into pasture to be restored to tillage. (Inoperative.)
1516. Thomas More's "Utopia" published.
1517. Royal Commission on Enclosures ordered by Wolsey. Legal proceedings against landowners stayed on promise of restitution.
1518. All who pleaded the King's Pardon to make restitution within forty days for enclosures made since 1485.
1524. Disturbances in Norwich and Yarmouth by cloth workers. General discontent at the King's "amicable loan"—a demand for one-sixth of all incomes.
1525. Peasant War in Germany.
1526. Further royal proclamations against enclosures.
1527–1529. Disturbances in Norfolk owing to scarcity of food, through bad harvests.
1529. Fall of Wolsey.
1531. Act passed granting licences to impotent beggars, and ordering the unlicensed to be whipped, sent to the place of their birth, and there to be set to labour.
1536. Dissolution of 376 lesser monasteries. Rising in Lincolnshire, followed by a general rising in the

North—the "Pilgrimage of Grace" (1537). Revolt put down, and followed by many executions.

Act passed ordering relief of impotent poor—other beggars to be whipped, mutilated, and hanged as felons on third conviction.

1537. Rising at Walsingham suppressed.

1539. Dissolution of all remaining monasteries, and confiscation of abbey lands.

1540. Rising in Norfolk, led by John Walker of Griston, suppressed.

1545. Funds and other properties of guilds, chantries, and brotherhoods vested in the Crown by Act of Parliament.

1547. Death of Henry VIII. and Accession of Edward VI. Somerset made Protector. Act of 1545 put into operation, and all endowments of guilds, etc., confiscated. Act passed for the punishment of beggars and vagabonds. "Every person, not impotent, loitering or wandering, and not seeking work, or leaving it when engaged, shall be considered as a vagabond: and being apprehended shall on conviction before two justices be marked with a V and adjudged a slave for two years." £10 to be recovered from anyone who assisted or detained a runaway slave. On conviction a runaway to be branded and adjudged a slave for ever, and chained with rings of iron. A second attempt at escape to be treated as felony punishable by death.

Act passed that anyone denying by word of mouth the supremacy of Edward VI. in Church or State should suffer forfeiture of goods and imprisonment: similar denial in writing or printing to be punished as high treason.

1548. Proclamation by Somerset against enclosures and Royal Commission appointed.

Appendix I

1549. Act of 1547 for punishment of vagabonds repealed, and Act of 1531 restored.

May. Risings in Somerset and Lincoln against enclosures.

June. Proclamation of Somerset for reopening of enclosed lands, and commission of inquiry. Agrarian disturbances in Essex, Kent, Wilts, and Oxford.

July. Rising in Cornwall and Devon against the new Book of Common Prayer.

The Norfolk Rising

1549. June 20. Riot at Attleboro' and fences pulled down.

July 7. Destruction of fences at Hetherset after annual feast at Wymondham.

July 8. Robert Kett invited to throw down his fences, agrees to do so, and to head the rising. The rebels begin their march.

July 10. Camp at Eaton Wood. Town close thrown open. Mayor of Norwich refuses permission to pass through the city.

July 11. River crossed at Hellesdon and camp at Drayton.

July 12–20. Camp fixed on Mousehold Heath. Kett sends formal petition to the King for the redress of grievances, and "administers justice" under the Oak of Reformation. Herald from the King promises that complaints shall be attended to, after the rebels have dispersed. General overthrow of fences in neighbourhood of Norwich, and arrest of landowners. Sotherton, a Norwich citizen, goes to London, and returns with York Herald.

July 21. General pardon, promised by the Herald on condition that people disperse, refused.

July 22–23. Kett orders attack on the city, on

refusal by the mayor of a passage for the rebels, and takes possession. The mayor deposed in favour of Alderman Steward.

July 31. Arrival of Lord Northampton with 1500 soldiers.

Aug. 1. Defeat and flight of Northampton. Lord Sheffield slain. Norwich in hands of Kett.

Aug. 2–20. General levy on all landowners, and further arrests.

Aug. 24. Lord Warwick enters Norwich with 14,000 troops. Fighting in the city.

Aug. 25. Issue uncertain. Citizens pray Warwick to depart.

Aug. 26. Arrival of reinforcements for Warwick —1400 lanznechts.

Aug. 27. Kett strikes camp at Mousehold, and gives battle in the Dussingdale. Defeat and rout of the rebels. Kett taken at Swannington. End of the Rising.

Aug. 28. Martial law in Norwich.

Sept. 8. Warwick returns to London.

Oct. Fall of Somerset. Warwick in power.

Nov. 26–29. Robert and William Kett tried and sentenced in London, and delivered to the High Sheriff of Norfolk.

Dec. 7. Robert Kett hanged in chains at Norwich Castle. William Kett hanged at Wymondham.

1550. Property of the Ketts confiscated.

1552. Execution of Somerset.

1553. Execution of Northumberland (Warwick).

1588. Francis Kett (grandson of Robert Kett) burnt, as a heretic, at Wymondham.

APPENDIX II

SOMERSET'S PROCLAMATION AGAINST ENCLOSURES

1st June 1548

"Forasmuch as the King's Majesty, the lord protector's grace, and the rest of his Privy Council have been advertized and put in remembrance as well by divers supplications and pitiful complaints of his Majesty's poor subjects, as also by other wise discreet men, having care to the good order of the Realm, that of late by the enclosing of lands and arable grounds, in divers and sundry places of the Realm, many have been driven to extreme poverty, and compelled to leave the places where they were born, and to seek them livings in other countries, with great misery and poverty insomuch that whereas in time past, ten, twenty and in some places 100 or 200 Christian people hath been inhabiting and kept household, to the bringing forth and nourishing of youth, and to the replenishing and fulfilling of His Majesty's Realm with faithful subjects who might serve both Almighty God, and the King's Majesty to the defence of this realm, now there is nothing kept but sheep or bullocks. All that land which heretofore was tilled and occupied with so many men, and did bring forth not only divers families in work and labour, but also capons, hens, chickens, small pigs and other such furniture of the markets, is now got by insatiable greediness of mind into one or two men's hands, and scarcely dwelt upon by one poor shepherd. So that the Realm thereby is brought to a miraculous desolation: houses decayed, parishes diminished, the force of

the Realm weakened, and Christian people by the greedy covetousness of some men eaten up and devoured by brute beasts, and driven from their houses by sheep and bullocks. And that although the same thing many sundry complaints and lamentations hath been heretofore made, and by the most wise and discreet princes his Majesty's father and grandfather the Kings of the most famous memory, King Henry VII. and King Henry VIII., with the consent and assent of the lords spiritual and temporal in divers parliaments divers and sundry laws and acts of parliament, and most godly ordinances in their several times have been made for the remedy thereof, yet the most insatiable covetousness of men doth not cease daily to encroach hereupon, and more and more to waste the Realm after this sort, bringing arable grounds into pastures, and letting houses, whole families and copyholds to fall down, decay and be waste. Wherefore His Highness is greatly moved both with a pitiful and tender zeal to his most loyal subjects and specially to the poor, which is minded to labour and travail for their livings, and not to live an idle and loitering life ; and of a most necessary regard to the surety and defence of his realm, which must be defended against the enemy with force of men, and the multitude of true subjects, not with flocks of sheep and droves of beasts. And further is advertized that by the ungodly and uncharitable means aforesaid, the said sheep and oxen being brought into a few men's hands a great multitude of them being together, and so made great droves and flocks, as well by natural reason, as also it may be justly thought, by the due punishment of God, such uncharitableness : great rots and murrains both of sheep and bullocks hath lately been sent of God, and seen in this Realme, the which should not by all reason so soon fall, if the same were dispersed into divers men's hands, and the said cattle also by all likelihood of truth should be more cheap, being in many men's hands as they be now in few, who may hold them dear, and tarry their advantage in the

market. And therefore by advice of his most entirely beloved uncle, the duke of Somerset, governor of his person, and protector of all his Realmes, dominions and subjects, and the rest of his Majesty's privy council hath weighed most deeply of all the said things. And upon the aforesaid considerations, and of princely zeal, to see that godly laws made with great travail, and approved by experience, and by the wise heads in the time of the said most prudent princes should not be made in vain but put in use and execution, hath appointed according to the said acts and proclamations a view and enquiry to be made, of all such as contrary to the said acts and godly ordinances, hath made enclosures and pastures of that which was arable ground, or let any house, tenement or meads decay and fall down, or otherwise committed or done anything to the contrary of the good and wholesome articles contained in the said acts and therefore willeth and commandeth all his loving subjects who knoweth any such defaults and offences contrary to the wealth and profit of this Realm of England, and the said godly laws and acts of parliament done and committed by any person who so ever he or they may be, to insinuate and give information of the offence to the King's Majesty's Commissioners who be appointed to hear the same, so truly and faithfully that neither for fear nor favour they omit to tell the truth of any, nor for displeasure name any man who is not guilty thereof. That a convenient and speedy reformation might be made herein to the honour of God and the King's Majesty, and the wealth and benefit of the whole Realm."

APPENDIX III

The "Requests and Demands of Robert Ket and his Accomplices," and the Reply of the King. With the list of "Ket's Governors" and the twenty-four Hundreds they represented, prefixed to the "Requests."

Forehoe.—Robert Ket, Thomas Rolf, William Ket.
North Greenhoe. — Edmund Famingham, William Tyddle.
South Erpingham.—Reynold Thurston, John Wolsey.
East Flegg and West Flegg.—Simon English, William Peck.
Launditch.—George Blomefield, William Harrison.
Eynesford.—Edmund Belys, Robert Sendall.
Humbleyard.—Thomas Prick, Henry Hodgekins.
North Erpingham.—Richard Bevis, William Doughty.
Taverham.—Thomas Garrod, William Peter.
Brothercross.—Robert Manson, Robert Ede.
Blofield.—John Spregey, Eli Hull.
Walsham.—John Kitball, Thomas Clarke.
Tunstead.—John Harper, Richard Lyon.
Happing.—Edward Joy, Thomas Clock.
Hentsead.—William Mowe, Thomas Halling.
Holt.—John Vossell, Valentine Moore.
Loddon and Clavering.—Robert Lerold, Richard Ward.
South Greenhoe.—Edward Bird, Thos. Tuddenham.
Mitford.—Simon Newell, William Howling.
Freebridge (*Lynn*).—William Heydon, Thomas Jacker.
Gallow.—Robert Cott, John Oxwick.
Depwade.—William Brown, Simon Sendall.
(*Suffolk.*—Richard Wright.[1])

[1] Twenty-four of the thirty-three Hundreds of Norfolk are represented, in addition to one delegate from Suffolk.

Appendix III

THE REQUESTS

" We pray your grace that where it is enacted for enclosing, that it be not hurtful to such as have enclosed saffron grounds, for they be greatly chargeable to them, and that from henceforth no man shall enclose any more.

(The lands where saffron was grown were not to be exempt from the royal proclamation forbidding enclosures.)

" We certify your grace that whereas the lords of the manors hath been charged with certain fre rents, the same lords hath sought means to charge the freeholders to pay the same rent, contrary to right.

(" Fre " rent was the rent due from a lord of the manor to the superior lord from whom he held it : the lord of the manor was bound to pay this himself, and not exact it from his tenants. Curiously enough, William Kett was lord of Chossell's Manor at Wymondham—a small estate belonging to the Earl of Warwick—who obtained it at the Dissolution of the Monasteries.)

" We pray your grace that no lord of the manor shall common upon the commons.

(That is, share the common rights of tenants on the common lands.)

" We pray that priests from henceforth shall purchase no lands, neither free nor bondy : and the lands that they have in possession may be let to temporal men, as they were in the first year of King Henry VII.

" We pray that rede ground and meadow ground may be at such price as they were in the first year of King Henry VII.

" We pray that all marshes that are holden of the King's majesty by fre rent or of any other, may be again at the price that they were in the first year of King Henry VII.

" We pray that all Bushells within your realm be of one stice, that is to say to be in measure VIII. gallons.

" We pray that priests or vicars that be not able to preach

and set forth the word of God to his parishioners may be thereby put from his benefice, and the parishioners there to choose another, or else the patron or lord of the town (to do so).

"We pray that the payments of castleward rent, and blanche ferme, and office lands, which hath been accustomed to be gathered of the tenants: whereas we suppose the lords ought to pay the same to their bailiffs for gathering their rents and not the tenants.

(Castleward rents were payments for the upkeep of the king's castles. "Office" lands were Crown lands. Blanch farms or white rents were the old name for the fixed rents of freeholders of a manor, and were so called because they were paid in silver or *white* money. Kett objected to the lord of the manor shifting his dues to the Crown on to the tenant.)

"We pray that no man under the degree of a knight or esquire keep a dove house, except it hath been of an old ancient custom.

"We pray that all freeholders and copyholders may take the profits of all commons, and the lords not to common nor take profit of the same.

"We pray that no Feudatory within your shires shall be a counsellor to any man in his office making, whereby the King shall be truly served, so that a man being of good conscience may be yearly chosen to the same office by the commons of the same shire.

(The Feudatory—an officer of the Crown holding a feud or fief—was not to influence elections; and was himself to be appointed by the people and not the Crown.)

"We pray your grace to take all liberty of lete into your own hands, whereby all men may quietly enjoy their commons with all profit.

(The Court lete of the lord of the manor had extensive powers in the Middle Ages, powers that were later mostly lodged in our Court of Quarter Sessions.)

"We pray that copyhold land that is unreasonable

rented may go as it did in the first year of King Henry VII.; and that at the death of a tenant, or of a sale the same lands to be charged with an easy fine as a capon or a reasonable [sum] of money for a remembrance.

" We pray that no priest shall hold no other office to any man of honour or worship, but only to be resident upon their benefices, whereby their parishioners may be instructed within the laws of God.

" We pray that all bond men may be made free, for God made all free with his precious bloodshedding.

" We pray that Rivers may be free and common to all men for fishing and passage.

" We pray that no man shall be put by your Feudatory to find any office, unless he holdeth of your grace in chief, or capite above £10 by year.

(Tenants under £10 were to be excused from holding office for post-mortem examinations and other county business.)

" We pray that the poor mariners or fishermen may have the whole profits of their fishings—such as porpoises, grampuses, whales, or any great fish—so it be not prejudicial to your grace.

" We pray that every proprietary parson or vicar having a benefice of £10 or more by year, shall either by themselves, or by some other person teach poor men's children of their parish the book called the catechism and the primer.

" We pray that it be not lawful to the lords of any manor to purchase lands freely, (*i.e.* that are freehold), and to let them out again by copy or court roll to their great advancement, and to the undoing of your poor subjects.

" We pray that no proprietary parson or vicar, in consideration of avoiding trouble and lawsuit between them and their poor parishioners, which they daily do proceed and attempt, shall from henceforth take for the full contents of all the tenthes which now they do receive, but 8d.

of the noble (6s. 8d.) in the full discharge of all other tythes.

(A proposal to commute tithes for money payment.)

"We pray that no man under the degree of—[word missing]—shall keep any coines upon any freehold or copyhold unless he pale them in so that it shall not be to the commons' annoyance.

"We pray that no person of what estate degree or condition he be shall from henceforth sell the awardship of any child, but that the same child if he live to his full age shall be at his own choosing concerning his marriage the King's wards only except.

(A good deal of money was made by the guardianship of children, and by marriage contracts—not to the advantage of the child.)

"We pray that no manner of person having a manor of his own, shall be no other lord's bailiff but only his own.

(A proposal to limit the range of power of landlords.)

"We pray that no lord, knight, or gentleman shall have or take in form any spiritual promotion.

"We pray your grace to give license and authority by your gracious commission under your great seal to such commissioners as your poor commons have chosen, or to as many of them as your majesty and your counsell shall appoint and think meet, for to redress and reform all such good laws, statutes, proclamations and all other your proceedings; which hath been hidden by your Justices of your peace, Sheriffs, Feudatories, and other your officers, from your poor commons, since the first year of the reign of your noble grandfather King Henry VII.

(This was an appeal to the Crown to sanction the popular representative government set up by Kett—the election of delegates for commissioners from the various Hundreds of Norfolk.)

"We pray that those your officers, which have offended your grace and your commons, and [are] so proved by the

complaint of your poor commons, do give unto these poor men so assembled 4d. every day so long as they have remained there.

(A demand for the payment of the people's representatives.)

"We pray that no lord, squire, nor gentleman do graze nor feed any bullocks or sheep if he may spend £40 a year by his lands, but only for the provision of his house.

"By me, ROBERT KET.
"By me, THOMAS COD.
"By me, THOMAS ALDRICH."

THE REPLY OF THE KING BY YORK HERALD TO KET'S REQUEST

(Though nominally a royal message, this reply was, of course, the answer of Somerset.)

"That, seeing he was always ready to receive and relieve the quiet complaints of any of his subjects, he marvelled much that upon opinion either of necessity in themselves, or of injustice in him, they should first put themselves into arms as a party against him, and then present him with their bold petitions; especially at such a time when, having fully reformed many other matters, he had lately set forth a proclamation against excessive prices of victuals, and had also appointed commissioners with ample authority for reformation of enclosures, of depopulations, of taking away commons, and of divers other things, whereof, doubtless some had been by this time redressed, had not these disorders given impediment to these designs generally; when they might well discern both his care and endeavour to set all matters in a right frame of reformation, as might best stand with his honour and their sureties. Notwithstanding this, however, they were eager violently to take his authority into their own hands.

Appendix III

" Touching their particular complaint for reducing farms and lands to their ancient rents, although it could not be done by his ordinary power without a parliament, yet he would so far extend his authority, royal and absolute, as to give charge to his commissioners to travail with all persons within their counties to reduce lands to the same rents whereat they were farmed forty years before, and that rents should be paid at Michaelmas then next ensuing, according to that rate ; and that such as would not presently yield to his commissioners for that redress, should, at the parliament which he would forthwith summon be overruled.

" Concerning their complaint for prices of wools, he would forthwith give order that his commissioners should cause clothiers to take wools, paying only two parts of the price whereat commonly they were sold the year next before ; and for the other third part, the owner and the buyer should stand to such order as the Parliament should appoint. At which also he would give order that landed men, to a certain proportion should be neither clothiers nor farmers. And further, that one man should not use divers occupations, nor have plurality of benefices nor of farms ; and generally, that then he would give order for all the residue of their requests in such sort as they should have good cause not only to remain quiet, but to pray for him, and to adventure their lives in his service.

" This Parliament, he promised, should begin in the beginning of October then next ensuing ; against which time they should appoint four or six of their county to present bills of their desires, and in the next season apply themselves to their harvest and other peaceable business at home, and not to drive him to necessity (whereof he would be sorry) by sharper means, to maintain both his own dignity and the common quiet."

APPENDIX IV

INDICTMENT FOUND AGAINST ROBERT KETE

MIDDLESEX.

Inquiry is to be made for our Lord the King that Whereas, in the Parliament of our Lord, Edward the Third, late King of England, progenitor of our Lord the King that now is, in the 25th year of his reign, amongst other things it is ordained and declared, That, when any one hath compassed or imagined the death of our Lord the King, or if any one hath levied war against our Lord the King in his realm, or be adherent to the enemies of our Lord the King in his realm, or give to them aid or comfort within his realm or elsewhere; and thereof be proveably attainted of open deed by their peers, which in the aforesaid cases has to be determined by the aforesaid, as in the same Statute more fully is contained; Notwithstanding, one Robert, surnamed Kete, late of Wyndham, in the county of Norfolk, tanner, otherwise called Robert Knight, late of Wyndham, in the said county of Norfolk, tanner, not having the fear of God before his eyes, but seduced by diabolical instigation, and not weighing his due allegiance; And also as a felonious and malicious traitor, and public enemy, against our most mighty and serene Lord, Edward VIth, by the grace of God, King of England, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, and on earth of the Church of England and Ireland Supreme Head, feloniously, maliciously and traitorously intending and plotting utterly to destroy and annihilate that hearty love and obedience which all true and faithful Subjects of our said Lord the King that now is of this his realm of England, bear and are rightly

held to bear towards the same our Lord the King; and to excite sedition, rebellion, and insurrection between the same our Lord the King and his faithful subjects; and to deprive the same our Lord the King of his dignity, honours, and pre-eminences; And in order to perfect and accomplish his said felonious and traitorous intention and wicked purposes, to the peril of our said Lord the King that now is, and the subversion of this his realm of England, according to his power, contrary to his due allegiance, on the 20th day of July, in the 3rd year of the reign of Edward VIth by the grace of God, King of England, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, and on earth of the Church of England and Ireland Supreme Head, and continuously after the said 20th day of July for six weeks then ensuing on "Mousholde hethe" in the parish of Thorpe, near Norwich in the county of Norfolk, and at divers other places in the said county of Norfolk, by traitorous proclamations, hue and cry, and the ringing of bells, very many malefactors being adherent and collecting to him to the number of twenty thousand; [He and they] did, as felons, traitors, enemies, and public rebels against our said most dread and excellent Lord the King that now is, Edward VIth, of their unanimous assent and consent, with banners unfurled, swords, shields, clubs, cannon, halberts, lances, bows, arrows, breastplates, coats of mail, caps, helmets, and other arms offensive and defensive, armed and arrayed in warlike manner, traitorously make an insurrection and levy war against the same our Lord the King that now is; And he traitorously caused some writings and bills then and there to be written and subscribed, as well to excite and procure the lieges of our said Lord the King in the said county of Norfolk, to levy open war against the same our Lord the King. And the aforesaid Robert Kett, with the aforesaid traitors and rebels, during all that 20th day of July, and the six weeks then ensuing to carry out their traitorous intention aforesaid, together on "Mousholde

Hethe " aforesaid in the county of Norfolk aforesaid, and in divers other places in the same county of Norfolk, with the aforesaid force of arms, assembled themselves, confederated and conspired together, by war and in warlike manner to destroy the people of our said Lord the King that now is in this his realm of England ; And very many faithful subjects of our said Lord the King that now is, viz. knights, squires and gentlemen of the said county of Norfolk, at Mount Surrey, in the said county of Norfolk, did they feloniously and traitorously imprison, and in that prison for a long time feloniously and traitorously detain them, crying and shouting out with these words in English—Kyll the Gentlemen.

And very many faithful subjects of our said Lord the King that now is, in the same county of Norfolk, did they traitorously despoil of their goods and chattels, the same 20th day of July and during the said six weeks then next ensuing, and by force of arms did they traitorously take and carry them off ; And very many faithful subjects of our said Lord the King that now is, who were under the rule and conduct of the most noble John, Earl of Warwick, who was appointed Lieutenant of our said Lord the King to subdue, bind and seize the said Robert Kete, and the traitors aforesaid, did they at Dussingesdale in the parishes of Thorpe and Sprowston, in the said county of Norfolk, on the 27th day of August, in the said 3rd year of our said Lord the King that now is, in the said county of Norfolk, with banners unfurled, feloniously and traitorously murder and slay ; And the same Robert Kete, and the other said traitors, on the same 27th of August, by the favour of God, were, by the General, the same most noble Earl of Warwick, honourably subdued and conquered : And thereupon the same Robert Kete, as a felonious traitor of our said Lord the King, did from the battle and place aforesaid, the same day and year, feloniously and traitorously betake himself as far as, and towards Cawson, in the said county of Nor-

folk, and was there taken and arrested by the lieges of our said Lord the King, for his wicked treasons aforesaid, against his due allegiance, and against the peace of our said Lord the King, his crown and dignity: and against the form of the Statute in this case lately made and provided.

(*Endorsed.*) *True Bill.*

APPENDIX V

INDICTMENT FOUND AGAINST WILLIAM KETE

MIDDLESEX.

The Jurors for our Lord the King present that, Whereas, in the Parliament of our Lord, Edward the Third, late King of England, progenitor of our Lord the King that now is, in the 25th year of his reign, amongst other things it is ordained and declared, That when any one hath compassed or imagined the death of our Lord the King, or if any one hath levied war against our Lord the King in his realm, or be adherent to the enemies of our Lord the King in his realm, or give to them aid or comfort within his realm or elsewhere; and thereof be proveably attainted of open deed by their peers, which in the aforesaid cases has to be determined by the aforesaid, as in the same Statute more fully is contained: Notwithstanding, one William, surnamed Kete, late of Wyndham, in the county of Norfolk aforesaid, mercer, otherwise William Knyght, of Wyndham, in the county of Norfolk aforesaid, mercer, not having God before his eyes, but seduced by diabolical instigation, and not weighing his due allegiance; And also, as a felonious and malicious traitor, and public enemy against our most mighty and serene Lord Edward VIth, by the grace of God, King of England, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, and on earth of the Church of England and Ireland Supreme Head, feloniously, maliciously, and traitorously intending and plotting utterly to destroy and annihilate that hearty love and obedience which all true and faithful subjects of our said Lord the King that now is of this his realm of England bear, and are rightly held to bear, towards

the same our Lord the King; And to excite sedition, rebellion and insurrection between the same our Lord the King and his faithful subjects; And in order to perfect and accomplish his said felonious, malicious, and traitorous intention, and wicked purposes to the peril of our said Lord the King that now is, and the subversion of this his realm of England, according to his power, against his due allegiance, did, on the 16th day of August in the 3rd year of the reign of Edward VIth by the grace of God King of England, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, and on earth of the Church of England and Ireland Supreme Head, and on the two days next ensuing, at Mount Surrey, in the parish of Thorpe, near Norwich, in the said county of Norfolk, and at divers other places within the county aforesaid by traitorous proclamations, and hue and cry, these being adherent and gathered to him, unlawfully and traitorously, Robert Kett and very many Malefactors there, to the number of 20,000 persons, as felonious traitors, enemies and public rebels against our said most dread and excellent Lord the King that now is, Edward VIth of their unanimous and traitorous assent and consent, with banners unfurled, swords, shields, clubs, cannon, halberts, lances, bows, arrows, breastplates, coats of mail, caps, helmets, and other arms, offensive and defensive, in warlike manner armed and arrayed, feloniously and traitorously make an insurrection and levy war against our same Lord the King that now is, and throughout the whole of that 16th day of August, and the said next two days ensuing, in order to accomplish their traitorous design aforesaid, did himself with the aforesaid Robert and other rebels and traitors, at Mount Surrey aforesaid, and elsewhere in the county of Norfolk, with force of arms aforesaid, traitorously assemble, confederate, and conspire together, by war and in warlike manner destroy the people of our said Lord the King that now is of this his realm of England; And further, the Jurors aforesaid present that the aforesaid William

Kete on the 20th day of August in the 3rd year of our said Lord the King that now is, on "Mousholde hethe" in the parish of Thorpe aforesaid, in the same county of Norfolk, did feloniously and traitorously give to the same Robert Kete and the said other traitors, then and there being, comfort aid and counsel in their traitorous and wicked designs, and in levying war against our same Lord the King, against his due allegiance and against the peace of our said Lord the King that now is, his crown and dignity, and against the form of this statute, in this case lately made and provided.

(*Endorsed*). *True Bill.*

APPENDIX VI

JUDGMENT AGAINST THE KETS[1]

And then to wit, on the same Tuesday, in the 3rd year above mentioned, at Westminster, in the county of Middlesex, before the aforesaid Commissioners, came the aforesaid . . . Robert Kete and William Kete, brought up by John Gage, knight, Constable of the Tower of London, into whose custody they had previously for the causes aforesaid, by the Council of our said Lord the King, been committed; And by the command of our Lord the King having been brought hither to the bar in their own persons; And been straightway, concerning the premises above severally laid to their charge, asked how they would be acquitted thereof, say they cannot gainsay but that they themselves, and each of them, concerning the praemises above severally laid to their charge are *Guilty* thereof, as is alleged above by the aforesaid several indictments; and thereupon they, and each one of them, throw themselves on the King's mercy; Whereupon, the King's serjeants-at-law, and the King's attorney, straightway, according to due form of law, sought against the aforesaid . . . Robert Kete and William Kete, on their own several recognizances in this part made Judgement and Execution thereupon to be had for our said Lord the King: and thereupon all and every the praemises having been seen and taken knowledge of by the Court. It was determined that the aforesaid . . . Robert Kete and William Kete be led by the aforesaid Constable of the Tower as far as to the said Tower, and from thence be drawn through the midst of the city of London straight to the

[1] From the Record of the Sessions.

gallows at Tyburn, and on that gallows be hanged, and while yet alive, that they be cast on the ground, and the entrails of each one of them be taken out and burnt before them, while yet alive, and their heads be cut off, and their bodies divided into four parts: and that the heads and quarters of each of them be placed where our Lord the King shall appoint, etc.

APPENDIX VII

A NOTE ON THE KETT FAMILY

The Ketts were a very old Norfolk family.[1] The name, spelt indifferently Cat, Chat, Kett, and Knight, proves the Ketts landholders at Hevingham from the reign of John till the time of Henry VI., when the male line became extinct. Another branch of the family was settled at Wymondham, and John Kett (or Knight) in 1483 was the principal landowner in that parish. Westwode Chapel near by was purchased by William Kett in 1546, forfeited to the Crown after the rebellion, and subsequently restored to William, son of Robert Kett.

Francis Kett, M.A., a son of this William, seceded from the Established Church under Elizabeth, and was burnt for Unitarian opinions at Wymondham in 1588.

Richard Kett, a great-grandson of Robert, sold Westwode Chapel and other properties at Wymondham in 1606, and the head of the family removed to Stoke Ferry, and later to Dickleburgh and Seething.

There are several Ketts buried in Wymondham church in the eighteenth century, and the name is a common one in Norfolk to-day.

[1] See F. W. Russell, and the "Record of the House of Gournay," by Daniel Gurney.

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